Yuri Narushima
Planet Ladder
3
DMP
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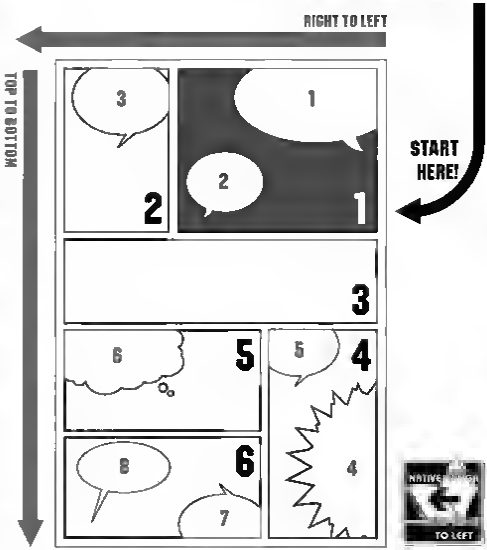
THIS GRAPHIC NOVEL IS READ IN ITS NATIVE FORMAT

READ EACH PANEL FROM RIGHT TO LEFT, TOP TO BOTTOM SEE HOW IT'S DONE BELOW!



PLANET LADDER 3

Part 1 5

Part 2 103

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A MONTH LATER...
WOW...
...LET'S GO HOME.

YOU USED TO BRING BACK LOTS OF POISONOUS HERBS BEFORE...
...BUT NOW YOU DON'T, NOT REALLY.
REALLY?
HMM...
...WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO EAT THESE.
I'M BEGINNING TO LEARN QUITE A FEW WAYS TO WEAVE...
SMILE SMILE
I GATHERED A LOT OF TREE VINE, AS WELL, AND HUNG IT OUT TO DRY! I MIGHT MAKE A BASKET OR A BAG WITH IT!
KYAA-AHH!
THE KANI!
HAH RAMPI-CHAN, YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO A THING!
GRIM -

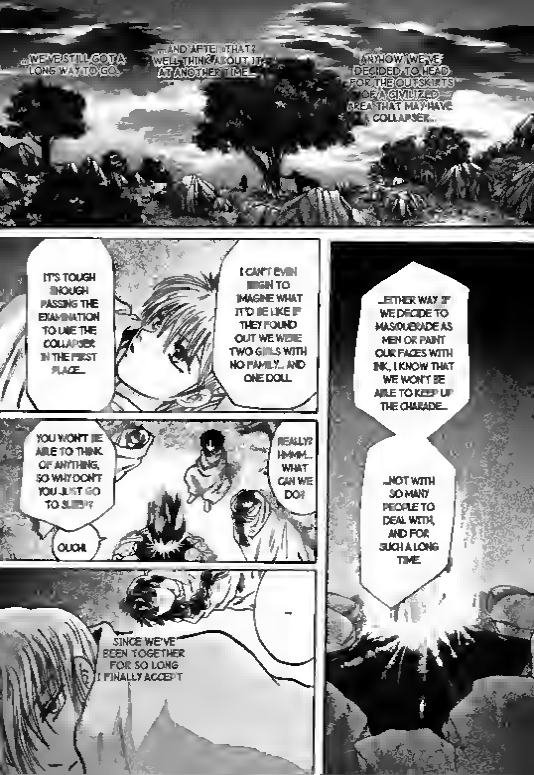
SO YOU WANT TO TRY TO SKIN THE RABBIT TODAY?
EVERYDAY ALL I DO IS EAT THE RABBIT THAT KAGAMI CATCHES AND YOU SKIN...
...SO THIS IS THE LEAST I CAN DO!!
DON'T WORRY IT'S ALREADY DEAD. IT WON'T STRUGGLE.
EEEK
DROP

...UMM OF COURSE IT WOULDN'T STRUGGLE.
DID ANYONE SAY THAT THIS WAS A RABBIT?
NEE HEE
...THERE'S ONE THING I'VE DEFINITELY LEARNED...
DURING OUR TRAVELS TOGETHER...
HEE HEE HEE
...RAMIEL-CHAN REALLY IS A VERY INTELLIGENT PERSON.
ALTHOUGH I PEST IT FROM THE BEGINNING...

...THIS PERSON WHO RAISED ME DEMANDED THAT, ABOVE ALL ELSE, I POSSESS A HIGH LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE.
THE ONE OLDER PERSON WHO RAISED ME...WELL, TECHNICALLY THERE WERE THREE PEOPLE ORIGINALLY, BUT THEY DIED ONE AFTER THE OTHER, SO THAT ONLY LEFT ONE PERSON...
...IT'S SIMPLY BECAUSE I'VE BEEN EDUCATED.
...SHE KNOWS A LOT, REALLY OLD THINGS AND REALLY NEW THINGS AS WELL.
...RAMEE-CHAN NOT ONLY KNOWS THE MAP OF THE AREA SURROUNDING THE PALACE, BUT THIS FAR-OFF PLACE TOO...
...I SEE, BUT ...
AHE: THAT'S WHY I THINK YOU'RE SO INTELLIGENT.
...IT'S NOT THAT YOU JUST KNOW, BUT THAT WHAT YOU KNOW IS SO USEFUL.
I DON'T THINK THAT'S SOMETHING YOU CAN JUST LEARN.
SO SHE KNOWS ABOUT THE BACK-ROADS AND ABOUT THIS OLD FOREST CABIN...
...IT'S BECAUSE OF HER THAT WE WERE ABLE TO TRAVEL WITHOUT ATTRACTING TONS OF ATTENTION.
WHAT?
WELL...
...I AGREE THAT KNOWING THINGS DOES MAKE A PERSON GREAT, BUT

...THE OTHER THING I'VE LEARNED IS THAT KAGAMI IS REALLY AMAZING.
LET'S SEE. AS FAR AS YOU CAN TELL, THERE ARE NO OTHER PEOPLE AROUND, RIGHT?
HA HA HA!
IT'S BECAUSE OF KAGAMI THAT WE'VE SAFE, NO MATTER WHAT ANIMAL TRAIL WE MIGHT FOLLOW...
...AND...
BUT IT'S BEEN SUCH A LONG TIME SINCE WE LAST SLEPT UNDER A ROOF.

BACK AT VAMPA'S PALACE, RACHEL ONCE TOLD ME WHEN HE MOMENTARILY GAINED HIS SANITY...
AT ANY RATE, WE'RE STILL SUCCESSFULLY ON THE RUN.
...IN FOUR CURSED SOULWASTE SEEKOU EL HERTHE LAST PRINCE SEEKOR THE SIGH OF THE FIT IN WORLD MESSIER (KAOTIC)
--I WISH HE'D GIVE ME A LITTLE MORE TO WORK WITH.
BUT WHAT'S TURNED OUT TO BE A VERY DAUNTING TASK.
...I'M SORRY
IT'S NOTHING YOU SHOULD APOLOGIZE FOR.
NORMALLY THEY'RE MUCH BIGGER, AND YOU CAN'T CARRY THEM AROUND.
AHHH.
THE ONE YOU SAW WAS A SPECIAL TYPE THAT THEY ONLY HAVE ON A SU.
THE THING THAT LOOKS LIKE AN HOUR GLASS?
I KNOW OF A RELIC THAT SHRINKS THAT, SHELL FRESCHI USING IT BUT, MAYBE...??
...SEEMS THAT YOU HAVE TO USE A DEVICE CALLED THE COLLAPSER.
AT ANY RATE, TO GO FROM HERE TO THE FIFTH WORLD.


...WE'VE STILL GOT A LONG WAY TO GO.
...AND AFTER THAT? WELL, I'LL THINK ABOUT IT AT ANOTHER TIME...
ANYHOW, WE'VE DECIDED TO HEAD FOR THE OUTSKIRTS OF A CIVILIZED AREA THAT MAY HAVE A COLLAPSER...
IT'S TOUGH ENOUGH PASSING THE EXAMINATION TO LIVE THE COLLAPSER IN THE FIRST PLACE...
I CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO IMAGINE WHAT IT'D BE LIKE IF THEY FOUND OUT WE WERE TWO GIRLS WITH NO FAMILY... AND ONE DOLL.
YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO THINK OF ANYTHING, SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO TO SLEEP?
OUCH.
REALLY? HMMM... WHAT CAN WE DO?
SINCE WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER FOR SO LONG I FINALLY ACCEPT
...EITHER WAY, IF WE DECIDE TO MASQUERADE AS MEN OR PAINT OUR FACES WITH INK, I KNOW THAT WE WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP UP THE CHARADE...
...NOT WITH SO MANY PEOPLE TO DEAL WITH, AND FOR SUCH A LONG TIME.

THAT AFTER SHE SAYS SOMETHING LIKE THAT...
SHE REALLY WON'T CARE IF I ACTUALLY GOOD TO SLEEP.
EVEN IF I DO SLEEP AND SHE TRIES TO THINK THAT HER MIGHT TO MAKE UP FOR ME, IT'S JUST NORMAL FOR HER.
...I WISH I COULD BE MORE OF A HELP TO HER.
THAT'S WHY AT TIMES LIKE THIS...

OF COURSE...
...A LOT OF IT HAS TO DO WITH ME FEELING SO USELESS, BUT...
...SHE SAID SHE WOULDN'T BE SAD AT ALL IF THE UNIVERSE, IF EVERYTHING WAS DESTROYED.
HEY KAGAMI? RECENTLY...
...I WAS THINKING ABOUT WHAT SORT OF PERSON KAMIIS.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
...TO TELL THE TRUTH...
I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE'S REALLY THINKING...
OH!
I FOUND IT!
KAMIT-CHAN REALLY SEEMS TO LIKE THIS STUFF
WE CAN'T MAKE TEA OUT OF IT...
SHE CAN DO ALL THESE THINGS THAT I CAN'T. SHE'S PRETTY AND SO SMART...
...SHE'S SO COOL, ISN'T SHE?

...BUT...
...EVEN AFTER TAKING SOMEONE LIKE ME WITH HER, AND AFTER BEING FORCED OUT OF HER HOME LIKE THAT...
...SHE'S NEVER BLAMED ANYONE.
IT'S NOT FOR SOMEONE ELSE'S BENEFIT.
IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE IT'S REALLY FOR HERSELF...
SHE SAYS IT'S NOT EVEN BECAUSE SHE HAS A WORLD THAT SHE WANTS TO PROTECT.
...WHAT DID YOU SAY, SIMON?!
HOW DARE I SAY...

IT'S NOT MY FIRST CHOICE, BUT IT'S NOT SOMETHING I'M TOTALLY AGAINST
HUH? BUT IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT...
IF SEO IS CHOSEN BY YOU OR IF I'M PLACED IN THE EMPEROR'S HAREM, WHAT HAPPENS HAPPENS AND THERE'S NOTHING CAN DO TO FIX IT RIGHT?
...ALTHOUGH I CAN'T IMAGINE SIDING WITH GEO
THAT SAID, WHAT DOES IT REALLY MATTER?
I MIGHT NOT LIKE IT, BUT I DON'T HATE IT.
IT'S JUST NOT MY FIRST CHOICE.
...WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST GIVE ME UP AND ENTER THE INNER PALACE WILLINGLY? THE INNER PALACE IS WAY BEYOND THE SCOPE OF MY IMAGINATION.
WHY WOULD I?
...SO INSTEAD OF CHOOSING TO DO SOMETHING PAINFUL AND DANGEROUS LIKE THIS...
SO I WOULD BE SAFE... AND--?
...AND?
BECAUSE IF YOU DID, YOU'D DEFINITELY BE SAFE.
EVEN IF THE END CAME, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID OF ANYTHING.

...I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL INTRIGUED BY HER.
I ADMIT...I THOUGHT OF THAT POSSIBILITY TOO, BUT...
...I'M NOT SURE WHY... I JUST DIDN'T LIKE IT
IT WASN'T RIGHT

EVEN THOUGH I BELIEVE THAT LIFE ITSELF HAS NO MEANING...
...TO GO FURTHER BY ELIMINATING ITS VALUE AS WELL...
THOSE ARE TWO VERY DIFFERENT THINGS, AREN'T THEY?
TO TRUST THAT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE OR THE WORLD CAN'T BE HELPED...
...BUT THEN APPLYING A VALUE TO LIFE...?
...SAMEJIMA-SAN...
...IT'S HARD TO UNDERSTAND...
ぽん

THERE'S NO MEANING, BUT A VALUE...
...I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
I'M NOT VERY SMART SO I DON'T REALLY GET IT BUT...
...SHE...
IT SOUNDS HARSH, YET...
...I THINK SHE'S SAYING SOMETHING VERY KIND AS WELL...

I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK THAT I'VE BEEN TALKING WAAAY TOO MUCH RECENTLY.
...I'VE TALKED ON AND ON ABOUT MYSELF NON-STOP. I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER TALKED ABOUT MYSELF SO MUCH IN MY LIFE!
GOOD MORNING, KAMEI-CHAN!
COME TO THINK OF IT, EVERY SINGLE DAY FOR A MONTH NOW...
I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL A LITTLE UNEASY WHEN I'M BEING STARED AT BY THOSE BIG EYES OF HERS.
...THIS...
STARE
...BUT KAMEI-CHAN...
AND, AS FAR AS I WAS BEING TALKED TO...
GUESS WHAT, KAMEI-CHAN?

MY GOAL IS TO BE THE ULTIMATE DWARVEN HOUSEMAID!!
...MY NUMBER 1 EFFORT WITH THIS "I GOTTA DO MY BEST" AURA...
...I DON'T KNOW IF SHE'S NOTICING OR NOT BUT...
I WANT HIM TO LIKE ME JUST A LITTLE.
I WANT TO MAKE HIM LESS TIRED.
I WANT TO MAKE BARFI'S MEALS TASTE GREAT
I CAN PRACTICALLY TOUCH WHATEVER SHE'S THINKING...
AND I DEFINITELY WON'T LET HER HEAR ME CALL HER LAURI!
...WHAT A WEIRD GIRL.

HMPH!
SHIFT
THIS USED TO SMELL HOLDY, BUT FOR SOME REASON IT SMELLS BETTER NOW
AH, NOW THAT I'M THINKING OF IT
BECAUSE IT...
WORK WORK WORK
PERFUMED LEAVES AND FLOWERS
CRUMPLE
...KEEPS DOING ALL THOSE USELESS LITTLE THINGS.

AND IT SEEMS LIKE THAT PRINCESS...
...IS REALLY DIFFERENT THAN THE PERSON I THOUGHT SHE WAS.
SLOWLY...
I'M BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND...

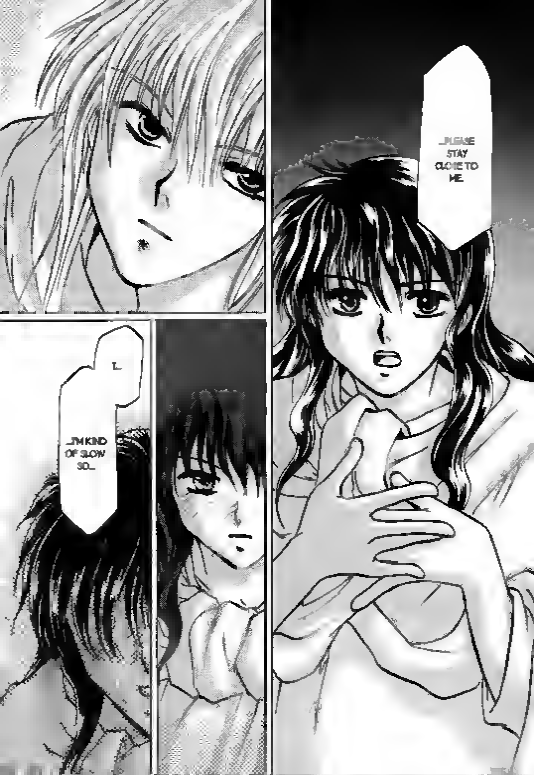
...SO THERE ARE LOTS OF THEM OVER HERE...
...AND OVER HERE, AS WELL?
WHERE ELSE DO YOU FEEL THE PRESENCE OF PEOPLE?
...WE CAN'T GET A BREAK, CAN WE?
OVER THERE, TOO.
IT CAN'T BE HELPED. WE'VE BEEN NEAR A MAJOR CROSSROADS.
IT COULD BE HARD TO CARRY ON WITHOUT CROSSING PATHS WITH ANYONE...
...THERE'S PROBABLY A MARKET SET UP THERE.
LOOKS LIKE WE'LL HAVE TO MOVE IN A LITTLE CLOSER...
...AND TRY OUR BEST TO MANEUVER THROUGH THE GAPS BETWEEN THE CARAVANS.

TELL ME RIGHT AWAY IF SOMEONE COMES CLOSE.
CAN YOU BE EVEN MORE AWARE OF PEOPLE AROUND US?
IF SOMEONE TRIES TO CAPTURE ME...
ONCE HE STARTS, I CAN'T STOP HIM.
...KAGAMI WILL SURELY KILL THAT PERSON.
...WILL...
IN ORDER TO CONVINCE SOMEONE NOT TO SEND ANY-MORE WASTED SACRIFICES AFTER YOU.
MAYBE HE'S BEEN PROGRAMMED TO KILL AS MANY OTHER WITNESSES AS HE CAN, OTHER THAN YOU.

IF IT WERE ME, I'D DO THE SAME THING.
BUT...
IF THIS DOLL WAS TRULY CREATED TO PROTECT THE PRINCESS OF CHOOSING FROM THE WORLD...
...!?
EVERYONE... BUT ME?
DOES THAT MEAN THAT, KAMUI...
THAT'S RIGHT... OF COURSE...
...IT'S JUST A HYPOTHESIS.
...JUST AS I THOUGHT... ...YOU ARE PRETTY SMART, AREN'T YOU?

HUH?
IN OTHER WORDS...
LET'S JUST SAY THAT SOMETHING HAPPENS AND HE HAS TO PROTECT YOU...
...ALONG WITH EVERYONE ELSE.
HE WOULD END UP KILLING ME, AS WELL.
SO MAYBE THE ONLY REASON HE HASN'T KILLED ME YET...
...IS BECAUSE HE HASN'T BEEN ORDERED TO DO SO.

...I WON'T LET THAT HAPPEN.
I CAN!
...I THOUGHT YOU COULDN'T STOP HIM.
HUH...?
I CAN DO IT... I'LL JUST THROW MYSELF IN FRONT OF YOU.
DON'T WORRY. I WON'T HATE YOU.
SO STAY WITH ME.


...PLEASE STAY CLOSE TO ME.
I...
...I'M KIND OF SLOW SO...

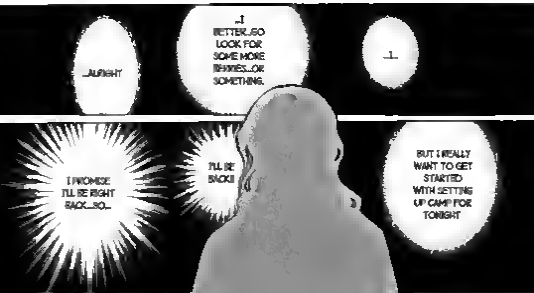
I MEAN, IF WE EVER GOT SEPARATED AND SOMETHING HAPPENED I DON'T KNOW IF I COULD GET TO YOU FAST ENOUGH.
SO, ITAMI CHAN, PLEASE STAY CLOSE TO ME.
..DON'T WORRY..
..ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS STAY NEAR TO ME..
..I DON'T CARE! I'D JUST THROW MYSELF OUT THERE TO PROTECT YOU.
..YOU KNOW..
-

HMM
WE'VE COME SO FAR, AND LEARNED AND SEEN A LOT TOGETHER, HAVEN'T WE?
UH-HUH.
SO WHY DON'T YOU STOP CALLING ME BAMBI-CHAN? IT'S NOT NATURAL.
OH.
YOU DON'T NEED THE CHAN.
UHH... YEAH.
...ABOUT ME
...WELL...
...YOU NORMALLY CALL ME "PRINCESS" OR "YOU," AND YOU RARELY USE MY REAL NAME.
...I WAS, WASN'T I?
WOULD YOU JUST CALL ME BY MY REAL NAME?

ぽん
YEAH
OH!
YOU MIGHT BE THE FIRST FRIEND I'VE EVER HAD THAT I'M ON A FIRST-NAME BASIS WITH!
WAIT...
IT'S NOT LIKE WE'VE FRIENDS.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I KNOW WHAT YOU CAN DO...
...WHAT YOUR CHAR-ACTER IS, AND WHAT YOU'RE MADE OF.
I ALSO KNOW HOW WELL YOUR MIND WORKS. I'VE BEEN MEASURING IT ALL.
...YOU KNOW...
...I THINK I UNDERSTAND A LOT ABOUT HOW YOU WORK.
...MEASURING...
...EEP

CAN YOU DO ME A FAVOR AND JUST IGNORE ME?
...NOT TO BE RUDE, BUT...
...I DON'T THINK I CAN STAND YOUR SMUG, "KNOW-IT-ALL" EXPRESSION.
NATURALLY...
...I DON'T WANT YOU TO PROTECT ME, AND REALLY IT'S NOT LIKE I NEED PROTECTION, ANYWAY.

...I'M COLD...
YOU'VE SUFFOCATING ME.
...I'M COLD...


...ALRIGHT
...I BETTER...GO LOOK FOR SOME MORE WHITES...OR SOMETHING.
...!
I PROMISE I'LL BE RIGHT BACK...SO...
I'LL BE BACK!
BUT I REALLY WANT TO GET STARTED WITH SETTING UP CAMP FOR TONIGHT

HA
I DON'T THINK I CAN STAND UP.

I ALWAYS TRYING...
SO HARD.
I ALWAYS THINK ABOUT HOW MUCH I REALLY NEED A...
BECAUSE I KNEW THAT INSECTS WAS ONLY A GOOD PERSON.
I WONDER WHY...?
BUT...I...
...ALL THE TIME...
...YOUR KNOW-IT ALL...
...EXPRESSION...
WHAT?
HA!
I JUST DON'T GET IT

I GUESS...
I JUST LIKE HER SO MUCH...
BUT SOMEHOW...
I GUESS I...
...I'M NOT READY YET.
...?
KAGAMI?
THERE'S NO ONE ELSE AROUND HERE, RIGHT?
OH NO...
OH...
I STILL
IS IT JUST ME, OR DID HE LOOK LIKE HE WAS DREADING SOMETHING?

CAN YOU FIND A RABBIT...
...AND BRING IT TO SAMEL...?
I'LL BE BACK SOON.
...
IF SOMETHING HAPPENS I'LL CALL YOU...
...I PROMISE, SO...
...JUST LET ME BE ALONE RIGHT NOW.
...I DON'T KNOW BUT...

THE LOOK ON HER FACE. IT'S LIKE THE WHOLE WORLD FELL DOWN ALL AROUND HER. BUT...?
SHORT
DO YOU THINK I MIGHT HAVE SAID SOMETHING WRONG, HADJA?
I GUESS I DON'T TOTALLY UNDERSTAND
SHE DOESN'T LOOK SO CUT
SHE'S GOT A LOT OF GUTS. I KNOW THAT FOR SURE...
...AND REALLY...
...OUR PRINCESS OF THE CHOOSING COULD HARDLY BE A VILLAGE

I JUST CAN'T GET USED TO THEM!
THOSE EYES...
THOSE DEEP BLUE EYES THAT PEER RIGHT THROUGH MY SOUL...
AND THOSE HANDS THE TOUCH THAT COMES AFTER SEEING RIGHT THROUGH ME.
SUCH WASTED THOUGHTS
I PACK ALL THIS WORTHLESS KNOWLEDGE IN MY HEAD.
AND YET I'M...
EMPTY

THAT'S WHY I DON'T NEED HER.

BECAUSE I HAVE NOTHING TO GIVE BACK. I DON'T NEED HER.

CAW! CAW!

CAW! CAW!

...If

I SHOULD GO BACK...

...BUT...

...I THINK I'VE WANDERED TOO FAR OFF...

I THINK I...

IT SHOULD BE SAFE...RIGHT? AFTER ALL, HE SAID THERE WASN'T ANYONE ELSE AROUND.

I WONDER...

...WAS THIS WHAT KAGAME WAS CREATING EARLIER?

A WAGON STATION

NO ONE...?
THERE'S JUST NOTHING...
THIS LOOKS SO OLD.
I WONDER WHY THEY JUST LEFT IT ALL BEHIND?
...I WONDER WHAT THIS IS.
LOOKS LIKE INSTRUMENTS OF SOME KIND.

...WHO'S THERE?
CRK
CRK
...KYAAAAAHH

KAGAME, YOU LIAR!
HE SAID THERE WAS NO ONE ELSE AROUND!
...IT CAN'T BE!
OH NO!
THAT VOICE... ...ARE YOU A GIRL?
...A GIRL?

...!!
OH MY GOD, WHAT IS IT?!
IT'S NOT... ...HUMAN
THAT BE...
WHAT ON EARTH!!
OH, THERE'S NO NEED TO BE AFRAID...
...BUT COULD YOU PLEASE FETCH ME SOME WATER?
AHHH...
IT IS A GIRL...
THERE'S NO ONE ELSE AROUND, HE SAID, BUT KAGAMI THIS...!?

WH...
...I'VE DRIED OUT!
I'VE BEEN TRAPPED IN HERE FOR SO LONG...
JUST WHAT ARE YOU?!
WELL...I... OKAY THAT'S FINE, BUT...!
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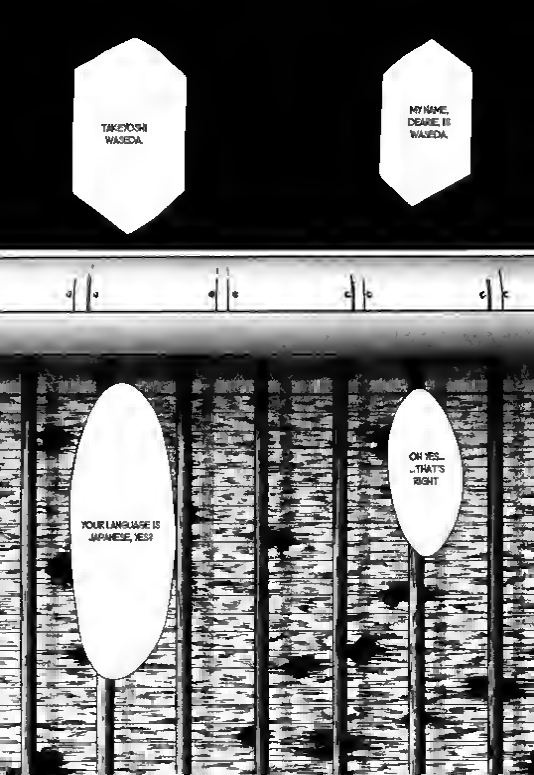

TAKEYOSHI WASEDA.
MY NAME, DEARIE, IS WASEDA.
YOUR LANGUAGE IS JAPANESE, YES?
OH YES... ...THAT'S RIGHT

AH, JAPANESE...
IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I HEARD MY MOTHER TONGUE.
GRAAACCE
WHAT?
WHAT DID YOU...
...JUST SAY.
GRACE

HUH..?

FLAP
FLAP
WHA...
...WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU...?!

THE SUN'S ALREADY SET!!
WHAT THE HECK IS SHE DOING?
SA...
EAMER CHAN...

EH...
...EXAMPLE OMAN...
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
...DID YOU DRAG BACK HOME?
AND JUST WHAT...

OH, GOODNESS!! ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL GIRL...
...TOO BAD MY TWO WINGS AREN'T ENOUGH TO CONTAIN THE LOVELINESS OF THESE TWO FLOWERS!!

HAVE THEY CAUGHT HER YET, BIG SISTER?
SHE'S STILL FREE TO ROAM AFTER SHAMING OUR FATHER LIKE THAT.
I HEARD THAT SHE'S VERY BEAUTIFUL.
AND VERY SMART, TOO?
(I'M SURE.)
OH, TWICE AS SMART AS YOU.
OH, CERTAINLY MORE SO THAN YOU!
(I THINK.)
I WONDER IF SHE'S A GOOD DANCER.
AND EMBROIDERY?
I'M SURE SHE DOESN'T TRIP OVER HER FEET LIKE YOU.
OF COURSE SHE DOESN'T PRICK HER FINGERS LIKE YOU DO.
AND SHINA MOI, RAMYUNNE...

OH,
HA HA HA!
YOU'RE SO MEAN!
BUT SHE'LL NEVER BE HAPPY LIKE YOU
pout
SHE'S A LITTLE CHEEKY AFTER ALL.
OH,
SOMETHING REALLY SNEAKY RIGHT?
BIG SISTER, WHAT DID YOU DO THIS TIME?
YEE HEE!
OH, YES. YOU SEE...
I HEARD A FEW PEOPLE SAY THAT ALL OVER HER CASTLE...
...THEY FOUND STRANDS OF HAIR.
DO YOU MEAN YOU FOUND THESE AT PALACE SHIINA...?!
STRANDS OF HAIR?
THAT'S RIGHT...A GIRL'S LONG, DARK HAIR.
AFTER ALL, SHE'S BEEN FREE FOR MUCH TOO LONG AND I NEED THEM TO GET THINGS MOVING.

LONG...
...BLACK HAIR!
BUT HOW COULD IT BE!
OH, BUT IT MAKES SENSE IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, SIRE.
AFTER ALL, SHE HAD NO REASON TO TAKE FLIGHT...
...AND HER TIMING IS ANOTHER THING.
THE GIRL FROM THE WARRANT
THE MORE YOU THINK ABOUT IT THE MORE IT FALLS INTO PLACE...
...BUT... COULD IT BE!
...I WANT OUR SEARCH FORCES INCREASED TEN-FOLD.
OH, BIG SISTER, YOU'VE SOOO CLEVER!!
I'LL HAVE NO MORE OF THIS DIPLOMACY!
FIND HER AND TORTURE HER IF YOU MUST! I JUST BRING ME THE NAME OF THE OWNER OF THAT BLACK HAIR!

YOU DO KNOW...
I'M SORRY I'M SO SORRY ISAMU-CHAN...
...BUT YOU SEE, MR. CHICKEN, ME...
AT LEAST A LITTLE ABOUT THE POSITION YOU'RE IN, KNIGHT...?
(THAT WAS ABOUT THE WORLD'S BEING IN A FRENZY OVER CAPTURING YOU)
IS THIS...
AHEM, MY NAME, DEAR LADY, IS WASEDA...
...BUT WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE...

SO, THE TIME HAS FINALLY COME THAT I WOULD BE REUNITED WITH THE LIKES OF THIS THING...
PLEASE DON'T SCOLD HER, MY SILVER LADY
WHAT NOTE (THE POSSIBILITIES!!)
IT SEEMS THAT FATE HAS LED ME TO YOU LADIES.
...HE SAID HE WAS ORIGINALLY FROM THE THIRD WORLD.
...WHAT?
...MY DEAR LADIES,
I DON'T BELIEVE THAT YOU...
...COULD BEGIN TO FATHOM THE DEPTHS OF MY SURPRISE.

ALAS, THESE EYES MAY CRY NO MORE TEARS.
...SO...
ALL I DID WAS BRING WATER TO MR. WASHOA, WHO'D BEEN TRAPPED IN A WAGON.

BUT AT ANY RATE...
I WAS CAPTURED AND MADE INTO A SORCERON ATTRACTION, YOU SEE.
(CRIED MEALL OUT)
...JUST ABOUT TEN BUCKETS WORTH.
AND AFTER THAT, HE BROKE OUT FROM HIS IRON CAGE HIMSELF.
(IT WAS PRETTY MUCH)
SHE SAVED MY LIFE. I CAN'T BUILD ANY STRENGTH WITHOUT WATER, YOU SEE.
THEY WERE STARTLED BY ME AND RAN AWAY.
(AND I WAS LEFT IN THAT STEEL CAGE...)
...BUT WHAT COWARDS THOSE BANDITS WERE.
ABOUT TEN YEARS AGO, MY CATTLES WERE ATTACKED BY BANDITS...
AND WITH NO FOOD OR WATER TO BOOT!
TEN YEARS!
OHMY KINGDOM FOR A BUCKET OF WATER.
OH, WHAT TRAGEDY MIGHT HAVE BEFALLEN ME HAD I NOT MET YOU TWO LADIES!
...HM...
...

...TAKEYOSHI WASEDA...
...I WAS BORN IN THE THIRD YEAR OF THE TAISHO PERIOD...
MY BIRTHPLACE WAS HIROSHIMA...
...IT MAY NOT BE APPARENT, BUT I ONCE ATTENDED THE PRESTIGIOUS TOKYO IMPERIAL UNIVERSITY.*
UHMMM...YOU MEAN TOKYO UNIVERSITY IF I REMEMBER RIGHT. I THINK MY GRANDFATHER'S GENERATION CALLS IT BY THAT NAME.
OR WHAT THAT TV CALLS IT
OH? SO I DID TRAVEL OFF COURSE TIME-WISE, AFTER ALL.
* THE NAME TOKYO IMPERIAL UNIVERSITY LASTED FROM 1897 TO APPROXIMATELY 1947
...IN OTHER WORDS...
THAT ISN'T YOUR REAL BODY, IS IT?
YES...
...JUST LIKE THAT GENTLEMAN THERE...

A DOLL?
AND YOUR BRAIN!
...MY BODY TOO IS THAT OF A DOLL.
I AM A GHOST TRAPPED WITHIN THIS DOLL.
IT'S A DOLL'S, AS WELL
WHAT A WONDROUS NIGHT THIS IS!

BEFORE YOU LADIES REST, SHOULD YOU SO DESIRE...
...I'D BE HAPPY TO TELL YOU A TALE FROM ONCE UPON A TIME.
IN THIS WORLD, THERE IS A THING CALLED THE COLLAPSER.

PEOPLE CARRY SUCH A DEVICE IN ORDER TO TRAVEL FROM WORLD TO WORLD AND ACROSS THE DIMENSIONS.
YES, THERE ARE TIMES THAT EVEN WITHOUT THE AID OF SUCH DEVICE...
...BY SOME MIRACLE OF THE UNIVERSE, A CARELESS INDIVIDUAL MAY FALL INTO A DIMENSIONAL BREAK.
THIS MAN...
...IN HIS BIRTH WORLD, WAS A STUDENT DRIVEN BY A LUST FOR KNOWLEDGE...
...BELIEVING IN HIS TALENTS, HIS WISH WAS SIMPLY TO EXCEL FOR HIS HOME, FOR HIS COUNTRY...
AND UNTIL THAT DAY AND THAT MOMENT, THIS WISH BURNED BRILLIANTLY WITHIN THE YOUNG MAN.

AFTER REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS IN A FOREST HE HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE...
...AFTER WANDERING FOR SO LONG...
...THE MAN CAME UPON WHAT SEEMED TO BE A WESTERN PALACE.
AND FROM THE DEPTHS OF THIS PALACE, THE YOUTH SAW THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FIGURE GAZING AT HIM.

IT SOUNDS ALMOST LIKE WHAT HAPPENED TO ME.
..THAT PERSON..
ONLY AFTER GAZING UPON THE VISAGE FOR A LONG TIME DID I REALIZE HIS GENDER.
NOT THAT THERE WAS ANYTHING ABOUT HIM THAT RESEMBLED A MAIDEN, BUT...

HE HAD SUCH BRILLIANT RED HAIR, THE LIKES OF WHICH I HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE.
AND THIS AURA AROUND HIM SEEMED SOMEHOW INHUMAN.
WHO...
...WHO ARE YOU?
!!
SO THAT NO PERSON OR THING COULD COME INTO DIRECT CONTACT FROM OUTSIDE.
THE WHOLE PLACE WAS ENVELOPED IN A CLEAR, THIN VEIL...
I DISCOVERED SOMETHING ELSE...

WHAT IS THIS?
...I MEAN...
MORE IMPORTANTLY, HOW COULD I POSSIBLY END UP IN THIS PLACE?
YOU'RE A FOREIGNER, RIGHT? DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
WHERE AM I?
...HELL.

...IT WASN'T UNTIL LATER...
...THAT I FOUND OUT THAT WAS HIS NAME.
SO...
NOT LONG AFTER WARDS, I WAS CAPTURED BY THE PALACE GUARDS.
I HAD A HARD TIME, AS I DID NOT KNOW A WORD OF THEIR LANGUAGE.
AND IT TOOK A WHILE FOR ME TO FINALLY REALIZE THAT THIS WAS A WORLD COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM MINE.

THE LAKE VILLA OF THE SECOND WORLD ASIA
AND THIS PALACE WAS HOME OTHER [illegible] INTO THE [illegible] KALE [illegible] [illegible] AND [illegible] SWORDS

...DO YOU UNDER STAND ME, YOU THIRD WORLDER?
WHAT DID YOU DO TO MY HEAD!?
AHH.
I'M SORRY...
...MY CHIP ISN'T PROGRAMMED WITH ANY INFORMATION FROM THE THIRD WORLD
BUT I BET I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO ASK ME.
PRINCE SIDI ASKED THAT WE IMPLANT YOU WITH A CHIP
...THAT IS, A MACHINE THAT HELPS YOU UNDERSTAND LANGUAGES FOREIGN TO YOU.
USUALLY YOU GET CHIPPED WHEN YOU'RE REALLY YOUNG, BUT YOU MIGHT EXPERIENCE SOME SIDE EFFECTS.
MA...
...MACHINE...

ALL OF A SUDDEN, I COULD READ THE ENGLISH DICTIONARY, THE SCRIPTWRITERS AND TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS I HAD IN MY BAG...
AND WHAT SHE TOLD ME WAS TRUE.
THERE'S NO WAY THAT'S TRUE.
WAIT A SECOND, THAT'S A LIE!
AND COME TO THINK OF IT...
...IF I UNDERSTOOD THE THIRD WORLD'S LANGUAGE, WOULDN'T I BE ONE OF THOSE BILINGUALS OR SOMETHING?
'CAUSE -
AND WHAT'S THE MATTER NOW?
THAT'S RIGHT. FOUR YEARS OLD AND A...
...EVEN THOUGH I HAVE A CHIP TOO, I'VE STILL EARNED FAILING GRADES IN ENGLISH.

and
provincial
I WONDER WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF I...
...HAD BEEN...
...PRODIGY
...UM...
...THE WORLD'S BIGGEST SENSATION?
I GUESS THAT'S TOO MUCH...
YOU MIGHT WANT TO GET YOUR CHIP CHECKED WHEN YOU HAVE TIME. THERE MIGHT BE A LIMITER ON IT.
UNLIKE ME, YOU WERE BORN HERE AND RAISED THERE.
ONE THING'S FOR SURE...
...YOU WEREN'T JUST RANDOMLY THROWN INTO THE THIRD WORLD.
...WHICH MEANS THAT...
THERE'S STILL MORE FOR ME TO...
THERE...
A LIMITER?
...SO IF WE TAKE THAT OFF, I'LL BE A BILINGUAL?
MOST LIKELY

TO SAY THE LEAST, SOMEONE FAMILIAR WITH THE THIRD WORLD...
...TOOK MEASURES TO ENSURE THAT YOU WEREN'T GOING TO AROUSE SUSPICIONS, RIGHT?
...SEE.
I...
...HMMM?
IF ONLY I COULD ASK KAGAME THEN...
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?
OH, IT'S NOTHING. IT CAN WAIT BUT PLEASE CONTINUE YOUR STORY.

IT SOUNDS ALMOST LIKE...
...WHAT HAPPENED TO ME.
GASP
THE SECOND WORLDWIRS) MEY...
...WE'VE ALL GOOD PEOPLE WHO LIKED TO LAUGH.
...WITH ONE EXCEPTION.
...SEIJI OF COURSE.

BEAM
OH!
THANK YOU SO MUCH...
YOU BROUGHT THE LAUNDRY IN WHILE I WAS OUT
SOAK
OF COURSE...
...OUTSIDE RAIN.
THIS...
...MINE.
AND YOU'VE GOTTEN SO MUCH BETTER AT SPEAKING OUR LANGUAGE!!!
...NO...
...LISTEN, I NEED TO TALK...
...SERENA-MEDE, LISTEN LITTLE...
GULP GULP
GULP GULP
YOU'RE JUST SO SMART AND SUCH A HARD WORKER, AREN'T YOU?

HER NAME WAS SERENADE.
THOUGH SHE WAS YOUNG, SHE WAS THE HEAD GARDENER RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THE VILLA'S GARDENING ACTIVITIES.
SERENADE,
WHY DO YOU WEAR THAT OUTFIT...
...WHEN YOU GO TO THE VILLA?
...HMM.
...WELL...
...I'LL TELL YOU NEXT TIME.
NEXT TIME...
DO THE GUARDS HAVE TO WEAR THE SAME ONES, TOO?
YES...
...BUT NEXT TIME, OKAY?
IT WAS NOT JUST HER. ANYONE WHO HAD BUSINESS WITH THE VILLA HAD TO WEAR A CLEAR OUTFIT FROM HEAD-TO-TOE OVER THEIR CLOTHES.

EVEN WITH ALL THE PRECAUTIONS, I NEVER ONCE SAW ANYONE ENTER.
THERE WAS A BIG VEIL COVERING PRINCE SEIJI'S THIRD PALACE.
NOT ONLY THAT...
...I WONDER WHY THAT IS...
...ENTERING THE VICINITY OF THE THIRD PALACE.
AND I WAS STERNLY AND REPEATEDLY WARNED AGAINST EVER...
THAT PERSON!
COULD HE BE CARRYING A HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS DISEASE?
...COULD IT BE A QUARANTINE?

LISTEN.
...PRINCE SEBU IS A VERY, VERY IMPORTANT PERSON.
TO THOSE OF US HERE...
I'M BEGGING YOU!
...WHATEVER YOU DO, DO NOT ENTER THE THIRD PALACE.
DO PLEASE...

THUD
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE

I WAS TOLD THE VILLA WAS FIRST INTENDED FOR PRINCE SEIJI'S MOTHER.

PRINCE SIRIUS'S MOTHER WAS BEAUTIFUL AND INTELLIGENT.
AND HER BLOOD WAS OF THE HIGHEST NOBILITY. HOWEVER...
...HER BODY WAS EXTREMELY WEAK.
AND SO THE LORD EMPEROR PREPARED A SPECIAL ROOM FOR HER TO ISOLATE HER FROM THE OUTSIDE AIR.
ALL HER NEEDS WERE TAKEN CARE OF BY DOLLS...
...AND EVEN THE LORD EMPEROR HIMSELF, BEFORE DIRECTLY MEETING WITH HER, HAD TO TAKE THE UTMOST PRECAUTIONS AND CLEANSE HIS BODY MANY TIMES TO KEEP OUTSIDE GERMS AWAY FROM HER

...WE WERE ALL SO VERY WORRIED AND SAD THAT OUR EMPRESS HAD TO LIVE WITHIN THAT LITTLE ROOM.
AT THAT TIME...
...NOW I KNOW THAT WAS THE GREATEST FORTUNE ONE COULD EVER HAVE.
BUT NOW...
OUR LADY EMPRESS PASSED AWAY FROM THE STRESS OF GIVING BIRTH TO PRINCE SEIJU.
IT'S NOTHING.
?
...IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING OF ALL.
...TAKE.
AND SO FOR THOSE OF THE VILLA, HER FINAL GIFT- PRINCE SEIJU...
SHE WAS SO VERY KIND AND STRONG.

SO,
IS PRINCE SHIJU JUST LIKE THEM?
IS THAT WHY HE CAN ONLY LIVE BEHIND THAT THIN VEIL?
PRINCE SHIJU...
...WAS BORN INTO THAT VILLA.
SO THE EMPRESS'S PALACE IN TURN BECAME THE IMPERIAL PRINCES.
THE DOLLS THAT ONCE ATTENDED OUR LADY EMPRESS ATTEND THE PRINCE EVEN NOW.
AND TO THIS DAY THE PRINCE HAS NEVER ONCE STEPPED ONE FOOT OUT OF THE THIRD PALACE.

I SPOKE TO THE PRINCE MANY TIMES DURING MY STAY.
I NEVER MET HIM DIRECTLY OF COURSE.
HIS CHIP WAS ABLE TO COMPREHEND THE LANGUAGE OF THE THIRD WORLD...
...SO BY BENDING EACH OTHER 3-D IMAGES, WE SPOKE OFTEN.
ALL THE PEOPLE OF ASU ARE SO INCREDIBLY INTELLIGENT ALREADY...
...BUT YOU ARE JUST AMAZING.
WHAT SORT OF PLAN IS THIS?
I SEE.
...BUT FOR SIMPLE BLUEPRINTS, THESE ARE...
I WILL TRANSFER A PERSON'S SOUL INTO IT
IT'S A PLAN FOR A NEW TYPE OF DOLL.

FOR SOME TIME NOW
I'VE BEEN CORRESPONDING WITH THE SCIENTISTS OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE OVER RESEARCH.
I HAVE...
I WANT TO TAKE THE SOUL OUT OF A LIVING BODY TO TAKE THE TRUE ESSENCE OF A HUMAN BEING,
AND PLACE THE SOUL INTO A DOLL, SO THAT THE PERSON MAY LIVE AGAIN WITHOUT FEAR OF AGE OR DECAY
IT'S COMPLETION IS ESSENTIAL.

SHINAMIDE TOLD ME THAT YOU'RE EXCEPTIONAL...
...AND SHE'S RIGHT. I THUS APPOINT YOU TO ASSIST ME IN THIS ENDEAVOR.

NO, PLEASE.
...IT'S A LITTLE HARD, BUT IF I MAY LISTEN, I'D LIKE TO.
IT'S BECOME A LONG STORY, RIGHT?
I CAN STOP NOW IF YOU'RE TIRED.

YOU SEE...
WELL,
WE WANT TO FIND THE PRINCE.
IT'S A MUST!
THERE'S SO MUCH THAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND
SO I REALLY WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT HIM.
AND I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE DOLLS THAT HE MADE, AS WELL.

...AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T HURT YOU TO SPEAK OF SUCH THINGS, I WANT TO HEAR MORE.
SO...
I HAD NO IDEA THAT I LOOKED WOUNDED.
OH? MY APOLOGIES.
...A LONG ONE.
BUT TRULY...
HAHAHA NOT TO WORRY. IT IS AN ANCIENT TALE NOW.
HUH? UHH, I MEAN...
LOOKS LIKE I...
...SAID SOMETHING I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO AGAIN.

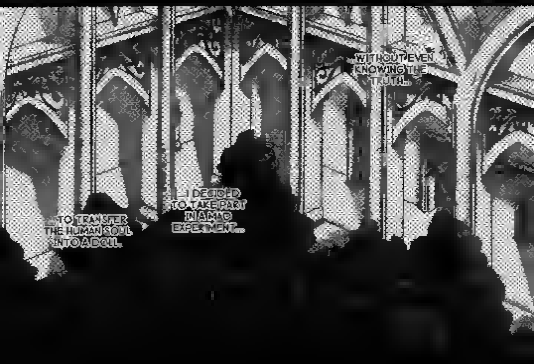
BESIDES, IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE?
IT JUST SACRILEGIOUS TO THE SOUL
SUCH MORE SICK RESEARCH LIKE THAT
A WEEK LONG ONE
THE IN THE W O R HAT I KNOW
BUT TO THINK OF WHAT CAN AND CANNOT BE DONE LOSES ITS EFFECT IN THIS WORLD
AHHHH
IT'S BEEN HALF A YEAR ALREADY! I'M SURE MY FAMILY'S WORRIED SICK ABOUT ME
EAT.
CREAK
CREAK

WHY IN THE WORLD DID SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPEN TO ME?!
WHAT ABOUT MY FUTURE?!
I CAN'T TAKE A TEST HERE.
I PROBABLY FLUNKED OUT! GOT EXPELLED!
WHAT WAS THE USE OF ME GETTING INTO MY DREAM SCHOOL IN THE FIRST PLACE?!
I DECIDED TO BECOME A SCIENTIST FOR MY COUNTRY'S SO.
THERE MIGHT EVEN BE A WAR.
THIS WAS GOING TO BE AN IMPORTANT TIME.
I WAS JUST DECEIVED FROM THE INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE.
WAR.

IF I COULD BRING THIS KNOWLEDGE BACK TO JAPAN...
IF...
ME.
ガバッ
THAT'S IT!
THAT'S IT!!
IF I COULD DO THAT...
...THEN JAPANESE SOLDIERS WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED ON THE BATTLEFIELD!!
IF THE BEING WHO FIGHTS IS A DOLL, THEN WE CAN MAKE AS MANY AS WE NEED. AND IF THE BODY IS BROKEN, WE JUST TRANSFER THE SOUL!
WE'LL BE VICTORIOUS NO MATTER WHAT SORT OF WAR FACES US!!
EVEN BETTER! I MAY EVEN BE ABLE TO MAKE IT SO NO ONE ELSE WILL EVER DIE DURING TIMES OF WAR!

I'M GOING BACK ONE DAY. JUST WATCH ME! GO, JAPAN
I'M GONNA DO IT!
YES!
THAT MEANS THAT I'LL BE ABLE TO GET BACK ON THE PATH TO SUCCESS.
TAKES ROOM.
...TA...
...TAKE!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND JAPANESE.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE HIM SO ENERGETIC, THOUGH.
WHAT IN THE WORLD IS TAKE BABBLING ABOUT?
WE HAVE THE COLLAPSER THAT ALLOWS FREE TRAVEL BETWEEN THE WORLDS...
IF THAT'S THE CASE, TAKE COULD GO HOME TO JAPAN EVEN NOW IF HE WANTED TO!!
-
ITS BROTHER...
...DO YOU THINK WE CAN KEEP THE TRUTH FROM HIM 'TIL THE END?

WHY DID HE HAVE TO FALL INTO OUR WORLD HOW?
POOR TAKE...
WHY HOW?
WE'LL CONTINUE TO TELL TAKE THAT THE COLLAPSER CAN'T RETURN HIM TO THE THIRD WORLD.
LET US BELIEVE THAT IT'S THE BEST PLAN OF ACTION FOR US.
WE CAN HIDE THE TRUTH FROM HIM.
WE'LL LET HIM BELIEVE THAT ONE DAYHE WILL BE ABLE TO RETURN HOME.
IT IS FAR BETTER NOT KNOWING THE TRUTH THAN TO KNOW A TRUTH THATLL ONLY LEAD TO MISERY
THIS WILL ALLOW TAKE TO BE HAPPY WITH HIS LIFE HERE.


AND SO...
WITHOUT EVEN KNOWING THE TRUTH...
I DECIDED TO TAKE PART IN A MAD EXPERIMENT...
...TO TRANSFER THE HUMAN SOUL INTO A DOLL.

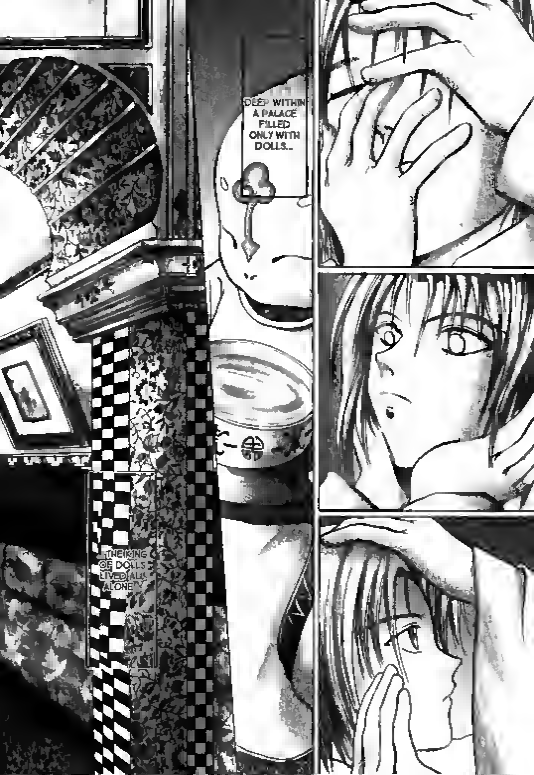
AH HA HA...
...HA HA HA HA!
HA HA...
HA HA...
...OH OH
I...
...HA HA...
...HAHAHAHA
MY...
...APOLOGIES...
...IS IT...
...FUNNY TO YOU?
I CREATED THIS PROTOTYPE OF MYSELF A LONG TIME AGO.

I THOUGHT I WOULD MAKE A CHICKEN FIRST
BECAUSE WE COULDN'T EXPERIMENT WITH HUMANS QUITE YET
BUT I DIDN'T HAVE THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY THEN, SO THE SIZE WAS A LITTLE OFF
IT'S NOT THAT... BUT... IT'S...
...HA HA HA...

I SEE.
SO IT'S FUNNY IN ITY
WHEN I...
...WHEN I WAS MAKING IT, I THOUGHT THAT I FELT SOME-THING ELSE TOO.
SO THAT WAS FUNNY?

THANK YOU!!

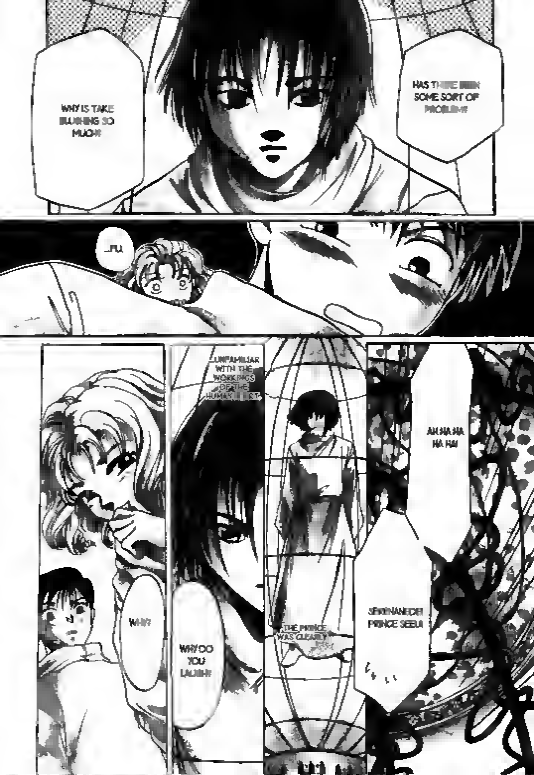
THE PRINCE TRULY WAS A STRANGE PERSON.
A DOLL'S HAIR COLOR...A DOLL'S CALMNESS


DEEP WITHIN A PALACE FILLED ONLY WITH DOLLS...
THE KING OF DOLLS LIVED ALL ALONE

NEGATIVE TO
FROM
ANOTHER
HUMAN BEING
RESIDES IN
HIMSELF

THE PRINCE'S DESIRE WAS TO SUCCESSFULLY TRANSFER A HUMAN SOUL INTO THE BODY OF A DOLL.
YOUR HIGHNESS!!
YOU CAN'T DO THAT!
WHATEVER YOU DO, YOU JUST CAN'T DO THAT!

BUT WHY NOT TAKE?
AREN'T YOU HAPPY WITH ME AS A TEST MODEL?
IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE TRANSFERRING THE SOULS RIGHT NOW. ARE WE? WE'RE JUST CREATING A MOLD FOR THE DOLLS.
BUT THE MOLD'S DEMANDED.
IT'S BETTER TO LIKE SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU, DON'T YOU THINK?
IT'S EVEN WORSE TO MAKE A MOLD OUT OF A CLOSE GIRLFRIEND, DARN IT!
JUST THINK ABOUT IT! US POKING AND PRODDING AND EXAMINING THIS...THIS THING THAT'S SHAPED LIKE YOU.
OH, TAKE, YOU DIRTY MAN.
THAT'S WHY I'M SAYING NO, NO, NO!
OH, SCARY!
YOU'RE JUST THINKING TOO MUCH, TAKE.
SEE, PRINCE SEIJU DOESN'T SEEM TO MIND.


WHY IS TAKE BLUSHING SO MUCH?
HAS THERE BEEN SOME SORT OF PROBLEM?
...FU
UNFAMILIAR WITH THE WORKINGS OF THE HUMAN HEART
AH HA HA HA HA!
SEIKIN AND BY PRINCE SEEU
THE PRINCE WAS CLEARLY
WHY?
WHY DO YOU LAUGH?

BECAUSE I AM ALIVE.
BECAUSE I AM ALIVE RIGHT NOW MY PRINCE, THAT IS WHY
AND PLEASE DON'T FORGET THAT...
...SHIMANRIDE IS A LIVING BEING WHO LOVES TO LAUGH.

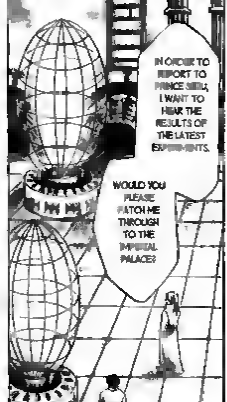
LET'S FAST FORWARD TO THE EXPERIMENT THAT TRANSFERS MY SOUL INTO A DOLL'S BODY.
IF AT THAT MOMENT THE DOLL SMILES, THEN YOU KNOW YOU'VE DONE IT.
...PLEASE PROMISE ME...
THAT IF THAT DOLL SMILES, YOU'LL SMILE AS WELL...
...BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH I KNOW I SHOULDN'T I'LL DEFINITELY HUG YOU.
AS WILL MY BROTHER...
...AND EVERYONE IN THE PALACE.

AND AS LONG AS WE SMILE AT YOU...
...THAT'LL BE YOUR PROOF THAT WE YET LIVE.
THOUGH OUR BODIES WILL BE DOLLS...
...I PROMISE YOU IT'LL BE US.
PLEASE DON'T FORGET THIS.
PRINCE SIEGLL...

IN ORDER TO CHANGE A PERSON'S SOUL INTO SIGNALS THAT CAN RESONATE WITH A DOLL'S BODY
THE PRINCE JUST STARED AT HER WITH THAT DOLL-LIKE EXPRESSION
IN ORDER TO CHANGE A PERSON'S SOUL INTO SIGNALS THAT CAN RESONATE WITH A DOLL'S BODY
ALL THE POPULATION FLEW RISHLY INTO THE PRINCE'S RESEARCH
THE PRINCE'S GOD RESEARCH WAS THE PRIORITY OVER ALL OTHER AFFAIRS OF THE STATE AND TOOK A HUGE PORTION OF THE NATION'S BUDGET

VROOOM
...HMM?

YOU ARE NOT THE GENTLEMAN I SPOKE TO LAST TIME.
IS HE ON VACATION TODAY?


IN ORDER TO REPORT TO PRINCE MIRU, I WANT TO HEAR THE RESULTS OF THE LATEST EXPERIMENTS.
WOULD YOU PLEASE ESCORT ME THROUGH TO THE IMPERIAL PALACE?

NO.
YOUR PREVIOUS CONTACT HAS DESERTED TO LEAVE THIS ASSIGNMENT.

NOT AGAIN.
WHY DO PEOPLE ON THIS PLANET QUIT THEIR JOBS SO EASILY?
TAKE...
DIDN'T WE HAVE ANOTHER GUY WHO DIDN'T WORK OUT RECENTLY?

THE PRINCE'S PALACE HAD NO CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD EXCEPT FOR OUR COMMUNICATIONS
IT WAS A QUICK THING.
YOU SHOULDN'T COMPLAIN TOO MUCH...
...ABOUT THINGS LIKE THIS.
EVEN I COULDN'T HELP BUT...
WHY IS IT THAT PEOPLE KEEP LEAVING THIS PLACE?
BUT AT THAT TIME,
OH!! HOW STRANGE!
IS IT A CAT?
...AGAIN TO GET A FEELING THAT THINGS LIKE THIS HAPPENED MUCH MORE OFTEN THAN NOT.

SO, THEY HAVE CATS EVEN IN THIS COUNTRY...
THEY SEEM TO HAVE CHICKENS TOO, OH, YES, THEY DO.
HA HA HA
...OH HIME, KITTY, KITTY.
AND STILL A KITTEN, AT THAT.
FROM THE LOOKS OF THAT DIRTY COAT, YOU'RE A STRAY, AREN'T YOU?
OH, DEAR... HOLD ON THERE...
...YOU CAN'T GO THAT WAY

IF YOU GO NEAR PRINCE SEIJI'S THIRD PALACE, YOU'LL GET KILLED ATI
HUMAN

MEW
AHHHH,
DARN IT!
IT RAN AWAY.
RUSTLE

THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I EVER SAW A REAL CAT
EVERYONE IN SIE IS USUALLY TOO CAUTIOUS.
THIS VEIL WON'T EASILY BE PIERCED.
OH, REALLY? THIS IS A LITTLE OFF THE SUBJECT...BUT IS IT ALRIGHT THAT I'M HERE RIGHT NOW? EVERYONE IN SIE COMES HERE IN SUCH A STRICT UNIFORM.
BUT JUST LOOK AT ME.
...DON'T WORRY
I SEE...
I WONDER WHAT THIS VEIL IS...
...WONDER IF I CAN ASK HIM ABOUT IT OR NOT...
UHHHM...
I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT...

I BELIEVE THAT WAS A STRAY...
...OR HALF A STRAY!
...I THOUGHT THAT CATS WERE THINGS THAT SAT ON A PERSON'S LAP.
WITH ALL ANIMALS, NOT JUST CATS AND DOGS...
SO WHY DID IT ESCAPE FROM YOU, TAKE?
ANIMALS THAT GROW UP WITHOUT BEING PETTED BY HUMANS WILL NEVER GET USED TO THEM.
...IN ORDER TO FEEL NORMAL AROUND HUMANS, THEY NEED TO BE RAISED AND TOUCHED FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE.

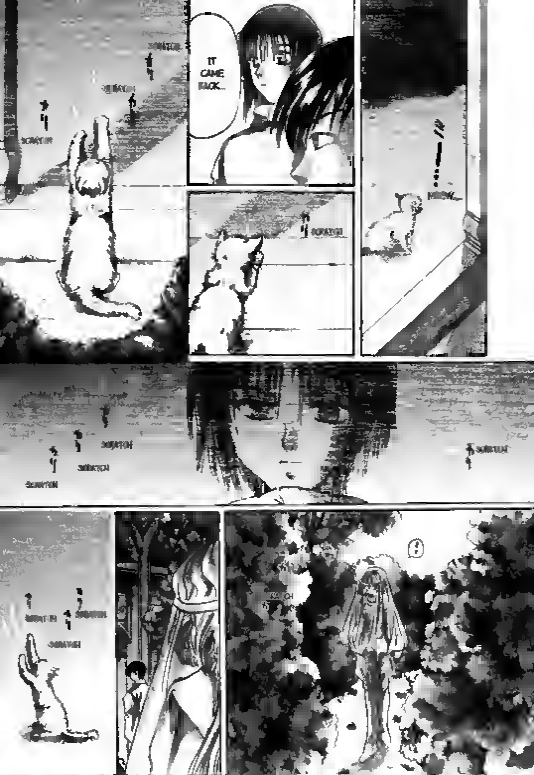
IT IS SAID THAT IT'LL BE THE END OF THE ASU BLOODLINE.
WHEN I BECOME THE ONLY LIVING BEING ON THIS PLANET...
THAT'S TRUE, THOUGH.
I MEAN, YOU'D NEED A FINE CUFFIN IN ORDER TO CONTINUE YOUR BLOODLINE.
WELL, OF COURSE THAT'S TRUE, MY PRINCE...IF YOU WERE ALONE.
WHOA, WHERE DID THAT SUDDENLY COME FROM!!
THE BLOOD OF ASU IS HARDLY THIN.

EVEN IF YOUR ROYAL BLOOD MINGLED WITH THE BLOOD OF AN OTHER-WORLDER...
...AS LONG AS A SINGLE DROP OF ROYAL BLOOD EXISTS, IT'D BE ENOUGH TO CONTINUE THE LINE.
SUCH IS THE BLOOD OF ARIA
BUT THEN...DOES THAT MEAN THAT YOU...
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE IN MY CASE
KHAR.
NO, MY BODY IS HEALTHY.
I MEAN...
CAN YOU NOT HAVE CHILDREN OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
I MEAN, UHHH--
BUT IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY THAT EVERYTHING BESIDES MY BODY IS HEALTHY AS WELL.

HUH?
..WHO WOULD DARE SAY SUCH A THING?
I..
I CANNOT SAY THAT I GREW UP TO BE A HEALTHY HUMAN BEING.
BUT MINGE SEEJA! YOU'RE STILL SO YOUNG.
HOW COULD ANYONE COME UP WITH SUCH A DIAGNOSIS?
IT'S JUST LIKE YOU SAID ABOUT THE CATS.
IT HAD BEEN PREDICTED FOR A TIME NOW THAT I WOULD NOT GROW UP "RIGHT."

A LIVING CREATURE THAT WAS NEVER ONCE TOUCHED BY A HUMAN HAND...
WILL NEVER ACCUSTOM ITSELF TO HUMANS.
MY MOTHER'S REMAINS WERE CLEARED AWAY BY THE DOLLS, IT SEEMS.
AND FOR FOURTEEN YEARS...

...TOUCHED ME.
...NO LIVING PERSON...
...OR NATURE, NO LIVING THING, HAS EVER...


IT CAME BACK...
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
SCRATCH

KYAAAAA...
...AAAAAAAA AAHHHHH.
SEIKE-HANEDE..?!
HOW DARE YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

CALM DOWN, SERENANEDE!
IT WON'T TEAR THROUGH THIS VEIL.
SERENANEDE!

YOU WERE RIGHT THERE...
BUT...
WHAT IF SOMETHING UNTHINKABLE HAD HAPPENED? WHAT THEN?
...WHAT THE HECK WERE YOU WAITING FOR?
BUT WHAT IF...?
IT WAS JUST ONE SMALL CAT CLAWING
AND PRINCE SEEU SAID THERE WAS NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT
...AND WAS IMMEDIATELY PUMMELED TO DEATH BY THE STAFF...

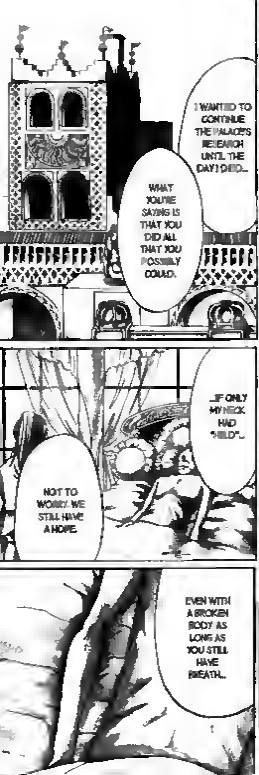
...WHAT IF GOD FORBID THE VEIL WAS TORN!
WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK WOULD BE ABLE TO PROTECT THE PRINCE THEN!!
STOP IT!
PLEASE, THAT'S ENOUGH. I THINK WE ALL GOT OVERLY EXCITED ABOUT THIS.
PLAYING OUT SUCH A PATHETIC SCENE IN FRONT OF PRINCE SERU— HOW CAN WE EVEN START TO UNDO SUCH...
...PRINCE SERU. PRINCE SERU. PRINCE SERU!
JUST WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?!
IF HE'S SO PRECIOUS TO YOU ALL, WHY DO YOU KEEP HIM LOCKED UP IN SUCH A HORRIBLE PLACE ALL ALONE?!
WHAT SORT OF GOD-AWFUL ILLNESS COULD HE POSSIBLY HAVE?!

I AM HEALTHY
THE PRINCE HIMSELF TOLD ME THAT HE WAS HEALTHY.

AGNES
THEY KEEP HIM WITHIN THAT VEIL. AS IF TO... ...SAVE HIM.
...WOULD BE ABLE TO PROTECT THE PRINCE THERE.
WHO DO YOU THINK...
...AS IF TO SEAL HIM IN ...
THEY KEEP HIM IN THAT VEIL...

WHY DOES IT TOTALLY THROW ITSELF INTO THE RESEARCH?
THE ISOLATION...
...TO PROTECT HIM FROM THE MILLIONS OF MICROORGANISMS IN THE AIR.
WHY DOES HE NEED THIS MUCH QUANTITY?
NO ONE DARES TO... THE...NO ONE DARES COME INTO CONTACT WITH HIM...
BECAUSE HIS BODY IS WEAK...
...MY BODY IS HEALTHY
TO PROTECT HIM FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

...THAT'S RIGHT...
...TAKE...
PRINCE SUBUTAI...
...HEALTHY.


I WANTED TO CONTINUE THE PALACE'S RESEARCH UNTIL THE DAY I DIED...
WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS THAT YOU DID ALL THAT YOU POSSIBLY COULD.
...IF ONLY MY NECK HAD "WILD"...
NOT TO WORRY. WE STILL HAVE A HOPE.
EVEN WITH A BROKEN BODY AS LONG AS YOU STILL HAVE BREATH...
OH ASU,
HE'S THE ONLY ONE...
...THAT III

AS LONG AS THE RESEARCH IS COMPLETED...
IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO TRANSFER YOUR SOUL INTO A DOLL AND CONTINUE TO LIVE.
THERE'S NO NEED TO SAY ANYTHING.
THE POPULATION OF ALICE IS DOWN TO A FIFTH OF WHAT IT ONCE WAS.
I'M SURE THE PRINCE IS TRYING HIS HARDEST RIGHT NOW
BUT...
...I WONDER WHAT WILL COME FIRST THE COMPLETION OF THE RESEARCH OR THE DEATH OF US ALL FROM THIS BACTERIA?

AN INVISIBLE WIND OF DEATH BLOWS OVER THIS PLANET
...THAT'S RIGHT JUST BY BREATHING...
JUST BY BREATHING...
...ARE WE ONE STEP CLOSER TO DEATH?

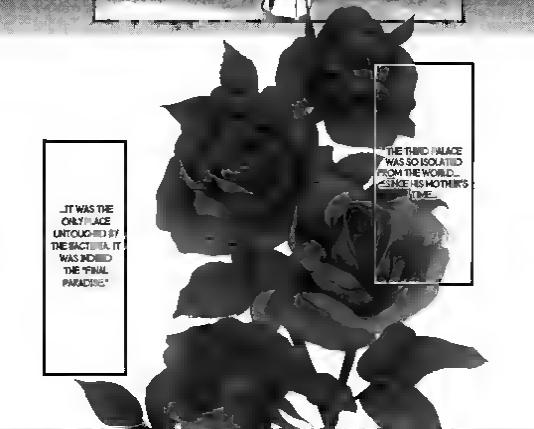
...SUCH DEVASTATING BACTERIA UNKNOWN TO EARTH WAS SOMEHOW BORN INTO THAT BEAUTIFUL, FRACTIOUS SECOND WORLD.
SO MANY DIFFERENT PHENOMENON TAKE EFFECT. SO MANY DIFFERENT FUTURES ARE BORN.
...NOT EVERY-THING HAS THE SAME FATE...
IN THIS PARALLEL UNIVERSE THAT WE LIVE IN...
THE EXPLANA-TION IS A LONG AND DIFFICULT ONE...
...BUT IF I'D SAY, IT WAS THE RESULT OF MANY COINCI-DENCES OF NATURE PILING UP IN ONE ANOTHER.

THERE WAS NO WAY IN WHICH ANY VERTEBRATES, STARTING WITH HUMANS, WOULD EXIST PAST THESE [illegible]
SOME SAID THIS BACTERIA WOULD NATURALLY BRING COMPLETE EXTINCTION IN LESS THAN 100 YEARS.
THOSE BACTERIA WERE MERELY SOME SORT OF SPECIAL MUTATION, AFTER ALL
JUST AS THE HANDS AND FEET OF A DOLL MIGHT BREAK...
...THE ELBOWS OR THE KNEES WOULD JUST BEGIN TO MELT.
THE BACTERIA MAINLY AFFECTED THE JOINTS OF THE BODY...
I WONDERED... WHEN I TOO WOULD FALL PREY TO THE SICKNESS.
WITH THEIR HANDS AND LEGS FALLING OFF, IT WAS HARDLY POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO WORK.
THE HIGH TURNOVER RATE WITHIN THE PALACE WASN'T SURPRISING.
SIMPLY WALKING MIGHT CAUSE THE HANDS, THE LEGS...
...EVEN THE NECK TO SUDDENLY FALL OFF!

THIS CROSS-SHAPED GARDEN...
...MY FATHER ONCE SUPERVISED IT, YOU KNOW.
...IT WAS SO WONDERFUL.
I WISH...
...I WISH YOU COULD HAVE SEEN IT WHEN MY FATHER WAS STILL ALIVE, TAKE...
HUNDREDS AND HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE CARED FOR IT
...IT REALLY WAS SO BEAUTIFUL.
THOSE CHEERFUL PEOPLE I MET...
...JUST LIKE THOSE WHO LIVED SUCH HORROR EVERY DAY OF THEIR LIVES.

I WISH...
...JUST A LITTLE...
...THAT I HAD BEEN ABLE TO RECREATE THAT GARDEN AROUND PRINCE SEIJI'S PALACE.
EVEN THOUGH I DIDN'T HAVE THE SKILLS TO DO SO,
I TRIED THE BEST I COULD.
SO I HAVE...
...NO REGRETS.

WHAT WAS REALLY BEING PROTECTED...
WAS IT THE KING'S WILL?


...IT WAS THE ONLY PALACE UNTOUCHED BY THE BACTERIA. IT WAS INDEED THE "FINAL PARADISE."
"THE THIRD PALACE WAS SO ISOLATED FROM THE WORLD... SINCE HER MOTHER'S TIME..."

...IT WAS ALSO THE LAST RASTION OF HUMAN LIFE ON ASH.

AND EVEN THOUGH ONLY ONE PERSON LIVED THERE...

DO YOU KNOW WHAT GROWTH HORMONES ARE?

THEY'RE ESSENTIAL TO THE GROWTH OF ANIMALS.

NOW HE'S GROWN VERY TALL AND STRONG, BUT...

WHEN PRINCE SIEGU WAS VERY YOUNG, HE LACKED THEM THE MOST

...IT WAS ALWAYS PREDICTED...

TAKE THIS BIRD HERE.

LET US SAY THAT IT WAS TAKEN AWAY FROM ITS PARENTS AND FRIENDS, AND WAS NEVER ONCE TOUCHED...

...LET'S SAY THAT IT WAS GIVEN MORE THAN ENOUGH WARMTH AND NOURISHMENT...

THE FORMER DIDN'T PRODUCE ENOUGH GROWTH HORMONES...AND IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THEY WERE ALSO LACKING EMOTIONALLY.
THOSE CREATURES WHICH REMAINED UNTOUCHED BY ANOTHER BIRGAN TO SHOW NOTICEABLE DIFFERENCES IN SIZE AND STRENGTH, TO THOSE THAT WERE TOUCHED.
WE'VE PERFORMED THIS EXPERIMENT WITH OTHER ANIMALS AS WELL.
STILL, THE CHANCES OF IT GROWING UP WOULD BE QUITE SLIM.
BUT STILL, HOW COULD THERE BE A CHILD THAT HAS NEVER TOUCHED THE SKIN OF ANOTHER HUMAN?
...THAT IS WHY WE STILL HAVE HIM TO THIS DAY.
AND SO THE DOLLS BEGAN TO TOUCH PRINCE SHIU WHEN HE WAS STILL YOUNG...
BUT...
...THERE ARE TIMES...
DURING THE DAY HE TRULY SHOWS SUCH A PEACEFUL, KIND FACE.
PRINCE SHIU IS A KIND SOUL...
...AND HE IS A VERY INTELLIGENT BEING TOO.

AT NIGHT

THE MAD PRINCE...
...WHY...
STILL...
...DID HE RECEIVE THAT NAME?

...I HAD ALWAYS BEEN PREDICTED.
SOMEHOW, THE RED ROSE THAT WAS PLANTED IN THE GARDEN...
...WAS EXCHANGED FOR AN ARTIFICIAL ONE...
...IT MAY EVEN BLOOM THERE, EVEN TO THIS DAY

NO ONE KNOWS SHE PLANTED IT.
IT COULD HAVE BEEN HER, BUT IT COULD HAVE BEEN ANYBODY ELSE.
SHOWING THE PRINCE AN ARTIFICIAL, EVER-LASTING FLOWER DID NOT SEEM LIKE SOMETHING SHE WOULD HAVE DONE AT ALL...
AND YET, IT COULD HAVE EASILY BEEN HER.
I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER KNOW THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER.
WHEN ONE IS PUSHED TO THE LIMITS AND THREATENED BY DEATH...
...THEY MAY SAY THINGS THAT THEY'D NEVER NORMALLY SAY OR DO THINGS THAT THEY NEVER THOUGHT THEY'D DO BEFORE.
AND YES...
IT IS PAINFUL, AFTER ALL, DEAR LADY

I WISH...
...I WISH I COULD MAKE IT PERFECT.
ALL THE THINGS THAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT...
...AND ALL THE EMOTIONS I FELT
I WISH I COULD MAKE IT ALL BEAUTIFUL...
...AND SOMEHOW MAKE SENSE OF IT ALL, AS WELL.
BECAUSE THE PEOPLE OF ASU WERE BEAUTIFUL...
...AND KIND PEOPLE.
THAT WAS THE TRUTH.

AND THE PEOPLE CONTINUED TO DIE.
HOPELESSNESS DEVOURED THE PLANET.
THE RESEARCH NEVER CAME TO BE.
IT JUST NEVER CAME TO BE.
WE SHOULD GO TO ANOTHER WORLD!
STAY CALM. PERHAPS THEY'LL FIND ANOTHER WAY OUT OF THIS.
WHY HAS THE COLLAPSE BEEN SEALED IN THE PALACE?
IF WE CAN'T DO IT HERE, THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN DO IT IN ANOTHER WORLD!
WHAT'S THE USE OF BRINGING BACTERIA OUT THERE AS WELL?

HOPE FADED TO PAIN AND BLADES CUT AWAY AT THE HEARTS THAT SOUGHT SALVATION.
WE COULD ONLY LIVE BY HURTING SOMEONE ELSE.
WHY CAN'T IT BE ENOUGH THAT WE DIE?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
...THINK OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER WE'RE ALL GONE!
WHY ARE WE THE ONLY ONES WHO HAVE TO DIE?
WHY, US?!
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?
THAT'S RIGHT! HOW COULD YOU?

BUT THEY'LL HAVE FREE REIGN TO TAKE OVER OUR PLANET, OUR RESOURCES.
THE OTHER WORLDERS WILL NEVER HAVE TO SUFFER.
AFTER KILLING US, THE BACTERIA WILL DISAPPEAR TOO.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE YOUR WAY!
I'M NOT GOING TO LET ANYONE STEAL IT!!
THEY'RE NOT GOING TO STEAL IT AWAY.
WE WON'T LET THEM STEAL IT ALL AWAY FROM US!
AHHOOOOOOAAAAAAAAHHHHH
WHO SAYS THIS ISN'T SOME SORT OF INVASION?
WE SHOULD SEEK REVENGE.
I'M GOING TO RUN
GIVE US THE COLLAPSING
JUST WATCH! JUST WATCH ME DO IT!!
I'M GONNA GET AWAY FROM THIS FORSAKEN PLACE.
THERE'S NEVER BEEN ANY EVIDENCE!

THIS CHILD MAY NOT BE INFECTED EITHER...
...PLEASE LET HIM OFF THIS PLANET!!
MY BODY IS STILL HEALTHY. I HAVEN'T BEEN INFECTED YET!!
PLEASE LET ME OUT OF HERE.
BANG
LET ME OUT!!
BANG
I'M NOT EVEN FROM THIS PLANET!!
WHY ME?
PLEASE LET ME GO HOME!! LET ME GO BACK TO JAPAN!!
WHY ME!!

YOU'RE THE THIRD-WORLDER, AREN'T YOU?
HOW ABOUT THE THIRD WORLD? DO YOU THINK THEY CAN OVERCOME THIS DISEASE?
FALL
AAAAAAAAH..
WELL, ANSWER ME.
HOW IS IT OVER THERE?
AAAAAHHHH...
AH..

I...
...I DON'T KNOW
I DON'T KNOW IF MY COUNTRY HAS THE TECHNOLOGY YET,
BUT IN MY WORLD...
...THERE IS GERMANY AND BRITAIN...
...AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA...
...AND RUSSIA, TOO.
I DON'T KNOW BUT THEY JUST MIGHT
THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP US.
ARE YOU SURE?
I HEARD THAT EVEN MORE OF THEM DIED.
WE HAVE TO GET IT!
HAVE TO GET THE COLLAPSER

LET US INTO THE PALACE!!
PLEASE LET US IN!
I HAVEN'T BEEN INFECTED.
I PROMISE I HAVEN'T BEEN INFECTED YET
THEY WERE TRYING TO GET INTO THE MAD PRINCE'S PALACE.
ANOTHER HUNDRED PEOPLE WERE KILLED BY THE GUARDS.

I WANT TO GET IN!
IT ISN'T FAIR THAT YOU'LL BE THE SOLE SURVIVOR.

DIE, DAMMIT!!
BE QUIET!!
ESPECIALLY SINCE YOU'RE THE PRINCE.
WHY DON'T YOU DIE FIRST!!
THIS MIGHT ALL SEEM BOTHERSOME TO YOU, BUT...
...IF THERE'S EVEN THE SLIGHTEST CHANCE...
EVEN I...EVEN I MIGHT BE INFECTED, SO...
IF IT'S ANY CONSOLATION, IT'S NO TROUBLE...
YOU ARE.
...BOTHERSOME...?
I...
...I WANT TO LIVE!!

BY MERELY BREATHING THE AIR ON THIS PLANET FOR 15 MINUTES, IT'S MORE THAN 90% LIKELY THAT YOU'VE BEEN INFECTED.
THE SAME GOES FOR EVERYONE ELSE.
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
...YOU'LL NEED THE SCYTHE.
IF YOU WANT TO BREAK THROUGH WITHOUT DESTROYING EVERYTHING INSIDE...
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN TEAR THROUGH THIS VEIL WITH THOSE WEAPONS, THINK AGAIN.
DIDN'T I TELL YOU THAT THE VEIL WAS NO ORDINARY MATERIAL?

THE LIVING WEAPON, THE LUNA'S MIRROR...
...THE TREASURE OF THE SECOND WORLD.
MY FATHER IS SAID TO HAVE HIDDEN IT SOMEWHERE IN THIS PALACE.
FIND IT!
BUT NOT EVERYONE CAN USE IT...
THE LIVING WEAPON WILL ONLY GIVE ITS STRENGTH TO THOSE WHO WANT TO LIVE.
AND WHOEVER MASTERS IT WILL ALSO GAIN A BODY THAT CAN'T DIE.
ONLY ONE CAN CLAIM THIS, BUT...
...IF YOU WANT TO LIVE, FIND IT. I HAVE NO RIGHT TO.

I'M NOT A PERFECT HUMAN BEING.
I KNOW THIS BETTER THAN ANYTHING.
BUT AT LEAST I KNOW THAT MUCH.
NO LIVING THING CAN TRULY LIVE WITHOUT TOUCHING SOMEONE ELSE.
I AM UNABLE TO TOUCH ANYONE ELSE.
I AM UNABLE TO LIVE.
BUT YOU'RE ALIVE!
IF WE TEAR THIS VEIL OPEN, ALL THAT STANDS BEFORE YOU IS DEATH.
IS THAT REALLY SO HORRIBLE?
EVERYONE DIES. FROM THA TIME WE ARE BORN, WE WALK THA PATH TO DEATH.
YOU'RE ALIVE, TOO.

SURROUNDED BY INFINITE DEATHS, WE BREATHE.
...AND ALL THOSE BREATHS WE TAKE, WE CALL LIFE.
BUT FOR ME...
...WHEN IT COMES TO BREATHING IN HERE VERSUS BREATHING OUT THERE...
...TO ME, THERE'S NO DIFFERENCE.
THAT'S WHY...
...TO BREATHE THE SAME AIR THAT YOU BREATHE...
...COULD HARDLY TROUBLE ME.

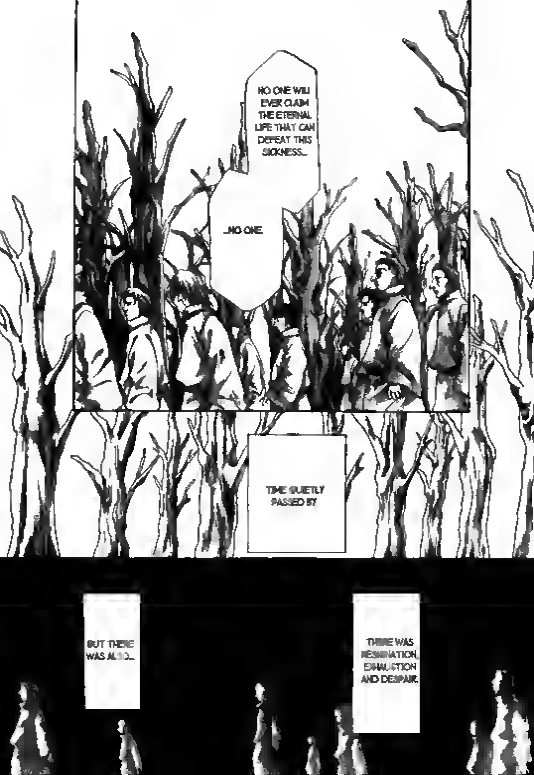
THE LIVING WEAPON IS SAID TO "SPEAK" TO ITS MASTER.
IT WILL SAY SOMETHING TO THE ENCHANTER, I HEAR.

WHEN THE LIVING WEAPON MEETS THE ONE IT HAS PICKED TO BE ITS MASTER,
IT WILL "CALL" TO THEM STRONGLY.
ONLY IN THE MOMENT WHEN THAT PERSON TAKES HOLD OF THE WEAPON WILL THEY ACTUALLY HEAR THE WORDS SPOKEN TO THEM.
...EVEN BEFORE BECOMING THE WEAPON'S MASTER...
...SOMETHING?
YES.
JUST BY BEING NEAR THE LIVING WEAPON, EVEN WITHOUT TOUCHING IT
THE DESTINED MAY EVEN SEE SOME SORT OF VISION...
...OR HAVE A STRANGE FEELING WASH OVER THEM.

SUBCONSCIOUSLY...
...THE DESTINED, TIME AND TIME AGAIN, BRING THEMSELVES TO WHERE THEIR WEAPON IS HIDDEN...
BUT NO ONE...
...NO ONE CAN HEAR IT CALL TO THEM.
IT'S ABSURD.
IT SIMPLY CAN'T BE.
A SCYTHE...
THAT PERSON WAS CARRYING ONE, BUT...
WELL, OF COURSE HE WOULD. IT'S WELL KNOWN THAT THE MAD PRINCE IS THE MASTER OF THE LUNATO MERCURY

I THINK YOU'RE MISSING THE POINT
SO DOES THAT MEAN HE REALLY WANTED TO LIVE?
I DON'T KNOW MYSELF.
BUT AS IT TURNED OUT, THE LUNATO MERCURY...
...WAS BURIED IN THE CENTER OF THE CROSS-SHAPED GARDEN ALL ALONG.
WHO ARE YOU?
I DON'T KNOW WHY...
...BUT I FEEL MYSELF BEING SUMMONED...

TIME QUIETLY PASSED BY
A WHILE AFTER THAT
SO I GUESS...
...THAT NONE OF US WILL EVER CLAIM THE LIVING WEAPON.
I CAN'T FIND IT. I CAN'T HEAR IT CALLING.


NO ONE WILL EVER CLAIM THE ETERNAL LIFE THAT CAN DEFEAT THIS SICKNESS...
...NO ONE.
TIME QUIETLY PASSED BY
BUT THERE WAS ALSO...
THERE WAS RESIGNATION, EXHAUSTION AND DESPAIR.

A WARMTH THAT SURPASSED EVERYTHING ELSE.
WHAT AM I DOING?
WE'RE REACTING THIS TREE UP SO IT WILL LIVE JUST A LITTLE LONGER.
THIS TREE HAS ALREADY LIVED FOR A VERY LONG TIME.
WE WANT IT TO SURVIVE EVEN IF WE PERISH.
FLOWERS...
WE WANT IT TO GROW FLOWERS.

WE JUST...
...HAPPENED TO DIG IT UP...
WE BELIEVE THIS IS IT...
...THE LUNATO MERCURY.
WHAT?
I HEARD IT WAS A SCYTHE.
WEIL, YES...
...BUT IT DOESN'T ALWAYS HAVE TO APPEAR SO.
ITS MASTER ISN'T AMONG US,
SO NO ONE HERE CAN HEAR ITS VOICE.
SAY TAKE...

BUT...
...IT WOULD BE TOO PAINFUL TO LEAVE ONLY THIS SAD SCENERY BEHIND.
I'M TRULY AT PEACE RIGHT NOW
RIGHT NOW
LET'S MAKE IT SO THESE TRIBES WILL LIVE ON, WITHOUT HAVING TO DEPEND ON HUMANS.
LET'S MAKE THIS PLACE BEAUTIFUL AGAIN.
...I THINK, I'LL CONTINUE THE RESEARCH.
I...
I THINK...
YES.
THAT'S GOOD NEWS.
AS LONG AS WE LIVE, IT'S NICE TO HAVE SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR, RIGHT?

HEY
SEE THAT SUN? IT MAY SHINE ON UP AS IF NOTHING'S WRONG, BUT ONE DAY IT TOO WILL BURN OUT
THE STARS WILL DISAPPEAR TOO.
THE WORLD IS NOT FOREVER.
NO MATTER HOW WE CHOOSE TO LIVE...
LIFE IS NEVER FOREVER.
I'M GLAD I WAS BORN.
MY WIFE...
...JUST HAD MY BEAUTIFUL BABY.

SO FROM NOW ON...
I WANT THEM TO ONLY SEE BEAUTIFUL THINGS.
...I'M SO GLAD I WAS BORN.
I...
I THINK I WANT TO DRAW SOMETHING RIGHT HERE.
SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD IDEA.
BUT IT'S NOT EVEN ART. IT'S JUST A SILLY SCRIBBLE.
THEN IT'S AN EVEN BETTER IDEA.

...I'VE MET SOMEONE...
WELL, I'VE GOT DADDY MOMMY GRANDPA, THE AUNTIE NEXT DOOR, MY DOG, ALL MY FRIENDS...
...AND ONE BOY THAT I LIKE. I REALLY, REALLY LOVE ALL
EVEN IF THEY AREN'T ETERNAL, FLOWERS ARE BEAUTIFUL.
THIS PLANET TOO.
AND...
...ITS PEOPLE.
IT COULD HAVE BEEN THAT I...
...ASIDE FROM THE PRINCE OF COURSE, WAS THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF ASU.
PERHAPS BECAUSE I WAS FROM THE THIRD WORLD...

IT WAS ONLY AFTER EVERYONE AROUND ME DISAPPEARED THAT I BEGAN TO SHOW SIGNS OF CONTAMINATION
IT SEEMS EVEN THE RESEARCH IS USELESS NOW
IT...

ARE YOU LAUGHING
TAKE?
YES,
I AM LAUGHING.
IT'S A DAMN SHAME THAT THE BACTERIA IS SO STRONG AGAINST THE COLD.
OR ELSE, WE COULD ALL GET PUT INTO A FROZEN SLEEP...
...AND WAIT FOR YOU TO SAVE US.

I DON'T THINK I'LL LIVE MUCH LONGER MYSELF.
IT'S HARD TO BREATHE.
THE PURIFICATION SYSTEM SEEMS TO BE SLOWLY DYING.
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE THE TECHS THAT CONTROLLED IT FROM OUTSIDE DIED...
...AND THE DOLLS ARE IN BAD SHAPE, AS WELL.
WHAT CAN I DO?!
PRINCE SEEJ,
TELL ME WHAT I CAN DO!
IF THERE'S ANYTHING THAT I CAN DO, PLEASE TELL ME!
I'M STILL LIVING!

TAKE!
PRINCE SEEU,
HAVE YOU EVER...
...HAVE YOU EVER FOUND SOMETHING THAT MADE IT GREAT TO BE ALIVE?!
YOU'RE NOT ALONE.
AND IF YOU LIVE, THEN IT MEANS THAT ADU LIVES.
YOU SAID SO YOURSELF, REMEMBER?! THE ROYAL BLOOD RUNS THICK.
YOU JUST CAN'T DIE THINKING LIKE THAT
YOU SAID IT, AND SO DID MANY OTHERS. WE ALL EVENTUALLY DIE.
WELL, OF COURSE WE'LL DIE, BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT WE SHOULD JUST SIT AND TAKE IT!!

IF THERE'S EVEN ONE THING THAT MAKES YOU THINK, "I'M GLAD I WAS BORN"...
...THEN YOU'VE ALREADY WON.
I WANT YOU TO WIN.
I DON'T CARE IF I'M BEING SELFISH...
...BUT I JUST WANT YOU TO WIN!!

...AND SO...

MY FINAL NIGHT ON ASU GAME.
THAT NIGHT...
...I WAS SITTING CLOSE TO THIS CHICKEN, JUST GAZING AT THE LUNA TO MERCURY.
I HAD NOT YET BROUGHT MYSELF TO SHOW IT TO PRINCE SEEU.
...THE LUNA TO MERCURY..."LUNAR."
BUT I KNEW THAT IF IT WERE THE TRUTH, THEN HE WOULD EASILY TEAR THROUGH THE VEIL THAT PROTECTED THE PALACE.
I HAD BEEN SUSPECTING FOR SOME TIME THAT HE WAS LUNA'S TRUE MASTER.

...I STILL FEARED EVEN THE SLIGHTEST CHANCE THAT ILLNESS WOULD COME OVER HIM.
EVEN THOUGH HE WOULD HAVE WON ETERNAL LIFE, EVEN THOUGH THOSE SHOULD HAVE BEEN NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT...
PRINCE SEEU SEEMS TO BE DISTURBED AGAIN TONIGHT
IT'S NIGHT
RATTLE
SHUDDER...HAPS A LITTLE MORE THAN USUAL?
RATTLE

カタ
RATTLE
カタ
RATTLE
RATTLE
...
...HUNTOL...R
SHUSSSH

IT HAPPENED IN AN INSTANT
LUNAR PIERCED FIGHT THROUGH ME...
...AND AT THE SAME TIME, PIERCED THROUGH THE EXPERIMENTAL UNIT AS WELL.

AND INTO THE THIRD PALACE.

...AND SO, MY LONG TALE SLOWLY COMES TO AN END.
ON MY DYING BREATH, I MADE A WISH.
...I REMEMBER MANIPULATING THE SWITCHES IN THE LABORATORY.
I WISHED AS MY CONSCIOUS ESCAPED ME, THAT I MIGHT ENTER THE BODY OF THIS DEVICE...
...THE LARGEST OF ALL MY WISHES.
MY FINAL WISH...

I DON'T KNOW WHY...
...OR HOW AZU ULTIMATELY BECAME THIS COLLECTION OF STAR DUST.

IT SEEMS.
...THAT I HAD BEEN SLEEPING FOR A VERY LONG TIME.
BUT WHEN I FINALLY AWOKE, I STILL COULD NOT GRASP A SINGLE MOMENT OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED.
AND SO TIME PASSED BY AND THE BACTERIA TOOK FELL TO EXTINCTION.
BUT PRINCE SHIU'S PALACE WAS SO FAR AWAY.
WITHOUT KNOWING IT, IN THIS BODY...
...WITH NOTHING ELSE TO DO...
...I FOUND MYSELF MERELY STARING AT IT DAY AFTER DAY.
EVENTUALLY I WAS FOUND BY COUNTLESS OTHER WORLDERS WHO CAME TO PLUNDER THE TREASURES OF AJUL.
...AND WAS BROUGHT HERE, TO TELENE, BY THE COLLAPSER.

EVEN THOSE LAWLESS BEASTS COULDN'T GET INSIDE THE THIRD PALACE.
I HEARD THAT THEY WERE COVERED BY A SILVER "RAIN" THAT THREATENED TO RIP THEM.
THE RAIN OF LUNAR...
...THEY SAY IT RAINED MANY TIMES ON THE BATTLEFIELDS OF THE PAST.
IT DIDN'T MATTER IF YOU WERE FRIEND OR FOE: AFTER THE RAIN, NO ONE REMAINED STANDING.

MR. WASEDA,
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HIM AGAIN?
...I SUPPOSE I DO. IT MAY EVEN BE THAT...
HMMM...
...WELL
...MORE THAN MY OWN PARENTS...
...MORE THAN ANYONE...
SEEING THAT RICH-HAIRED, BEAUTIFUL PRINCE WOULD MAKE ME...

...THE MOST...
...SPECIOUSS.
WHAT'S THE MATTER?

I WAS ALMOST SURE THAT...
YOU MANAGED TO CONTROL YOURSELF REALLY WELL DURING THAT STORY,
EMMI-CHAN
...YOU'D START CRYING AT LEAST ONCE.
EH? WELL...
...IT'S NOT THAT, BUT...
...SO I...
IT'S JUST THAT...
...IT WAS SUCH A SAD STORY.

I WOULD HAVE FELT BAD CRYING DURING IT...
...BECAUSE IT WASN'T MINE TO CRY FOR.
OH, RAMEN-CHAN,
ALL IT TAKES IS A STORY TO MAKE ME SAD.
THAT SOMETHING COULD BE DESTROYED -
IT'S JUST SO SAD
NO MATTER WHAT PLANET IT IS, IF IT'S WIPED OUT IT'S JUST SO TERRIBLE TO ME.

I...
...I DON'T UNDERSTAND A LOT OF THE DIFFICULT PARTS.
BUT I KNOW THAT I'M SAD.
WILL THE WORLD REALLY BE DESTROYED?
I SUPPOSE.
THE WORLD I'M FROM...AND HERE, TOO?
WILL THEY ALL SUFFER LIKE IN THAT STORY?
I GUESS.
THEY WON'T BE DESTROYED BY AN ILLNESS, THOUGH. THE CONDITIONS ARE DIFFERENT.
BUT IN THE END, THEY'LL HAVE THE SAME FATE.
I...
...I DON'T WANT THAT.

I SEE.
MY NAME IS KAGUYA HAYUYAMA.
LATELY THINGS HAVE BEEN GETTING QUITE TOUGH.
AND DURING THESE TOUGH TIMES, SINCE I HEARD A VERY TOUGH STORY...
...MY HEAD IS STARTING TO FEEL REALLY TIRED AS WELL.

BUT I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO IN THIS SITUATION.
NOT TO BRAG, BUT I'M A VERY SMART PERSON.
...TO SEE THEM GO THROUGH ALL THIS PAIN. I KNOW THAT I DON'T WANT THINGS TO GO ON LIKE THIS.
TO SEE SO MANY PEOPLE SAD-DENED OR HURT...
YOU APPEARED IN ONE OF MY DREAMS BEFORE.
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT YOU WERE ALL ALONE FOR SO LONG.
HEY...
...DO YOU KNOW THAT I CAN'T DO ANYTHING ON MY OWN?

BUT...
...I THINK THAT FEW PEOPLE CAN DO THINGS ALL ON THEIR OWN.
OR NOT...
...MAYBE I'M JUST AN ESPECIALLY USELESS CASE.
HELP ME!
GRAB
JOHN!!

KAEAME...?

A LOT OF THEM?
DO YOU FEEL THE PRESENCE OF SOMEONE?
THEY'RE CLOSE BY...

IF YOU WISH, WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO CAUSE A LITTLE SCENE FOR YOU?
HMM...
...SO IT SEEMS THAT YOU YOUNG LADIES ALSO HAVE PROBLEMS OF YOUR OWN.
NO NEED. WE'VE ALREADY GOT A VIOLENT ONE ON STAFF
WILL YOU TURN THE OTHER WAY FOR ONE MOMENT?
KAGAMI...MR. WASEDA...

...I'M GONNA GET CAUGHT
...SAKIE-CHAN.
I'M GONNA SEE WHAT HAPPENS THEN.
HEE HEE HEE
OH, MY. HOW ADORABLE.
I'M SURE YOUR KNIGHT COULD CRUSH ALL OF THEM WITH HIS PINKY.
THERE ARE ONLY A DOZEN OF THEM.

I DON'T WANT HIM TO DO THAT...
...SO I'M GOING TO GET NEAR THEM FIRST
KAGAMI
BUT...
PLEASE REMEMBER THIS...
AND PLEASE LISTEN TO ME. IF YOU ARE VIOLENT TO ANYONE...
...EVEN IF IT'S TO PROTECT ME...
...I'LL KILL MYSELF.
I'M NOT KIDDING.

...SINCE I CAME HERE, I HAVEN'T UNDERSTOOD ANYTHING.
YOU KNOW WHAT?
I...
EVEN NOW, THERE ARE JUST TOO MANY THINGS I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
...BUT AS WE TRAVELED, SAMIR-CHAN...
...SHE TOLD ME SO MUCH ABOUT THIS WORLD, RIGHT?
...SO I STARTED THINKING AS WELL...
...IF I KEEP RUNNING, IT'S NOT GONNA GET ANY EASIER.
WHETHER IT'S USING THE COLLAPSER OR FINDING SEELI...
...MIGHT WORK OUT BETTER.
SO MAYBE JUMPING IN THERE AND TAKING MY OWN CHANCES...

WHAT'S WITH ALL THIS CONFIDENCE ALL OF A SUDDEN?
...UHH...
WELL, IT'S NOT THAT IT'S REALLY CONFIDENCE.
IT'S JUST...
IT'S JUST THAT...
I...
I MEAN,
IT'S JUST THAT I FINISHED HEARING MR. WASHIDA'S STORY.
I KNOW IT'S A SIMPLE CONCEPT, BUT...

YOU'VE DECIDED TO GIVE SAVING THE WORLD A GO?
AT LEAST I HOPE THAT'S NOT WHAT YOU WERE THINKING.
ポッ
BLUSH

I THINK YOU JUST MIGHT BE A LITTLE CRAZY.
THE SEVENTH WORLD'S EMPEROR KURA IS AN INVINCIBLE VETERAN GENERAL.
NEED CRUSH A LITTLE GIRL LIKE YOU.
YOU MIGHT GET A HIT IN, BUT THEN NEED SAY ONE WORD AND INSTANTLY WIN YOU OVER.
AND IF THAT DIDN'T WORK, I'M QUITE SURE THAT HE WOULDN'T BE ADVERSE TO SLICING OFF ONE OR BOTH OF YOUR EARS, AS LONG AS YOU'RE STILL BREATHING.
NEED DO WHATEVER IT TOOK TO MAKE YOU LISTEN.
...IN THE END HE NEEDS ME, RIGHT?
BUT...
RIGHT?
...
THAT'S RIGHT.

DO YOU THINK YOU CAN REALLY THREATEN THE WORLD WITH JUST THAT?
DO YOU STILL FEEL LIKE TAKING HIM ON?
THAT'S YOUR ONLY WEAPON, YOU KNOW
YEAH, I DO.
AT LEAST...
...I'M GONNA TRY
- TO BE CONTINUED IN VOLUME 4 -

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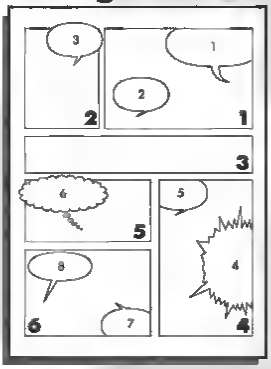

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Follow the diagram to see how its done.
Surf's Up!

PLANET LADDER 1

My name is Kaguya. In an instant I went from being a regular high school student to a savior princess. Now I have been driven into another universe where fate binds me to its salvation. I find myself trifling with a beautiful woman named Bambi and a strange doll named Gold that protects me at any cost. Both of them are supremely skilled in what they do yet I feel utterly useless. I was hoping to befriend Bambi and prove my worth during our travels, but I cannot seem to find a way to make my mark. Along the way we meet the wise Waseda who comes from my world. Can he help me fulfill my given destiny and find my way back home...

Teens 13+

Native Manga

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